

## GOETHE — UNESCO'S HOMAGE



# G O E T H E

UNESCO'S HOMAGE  
ON THE OCCASION OF  
THE TWO HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY  
OF HIS BIRTH

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**O**n the occasion of the two hundredth anniversary of the birth of Goethe, Jaime Torres Bodet, Director-General of Unesco, sent to a certain number of eminent writers the following letter :

*The world is celebrating this year the bicentenary of Goethe's birth. In such a celebration, Unesco sees cogent reasons for persevering in the work of promoting understanding between cultures which has been entrusted to it. It is proud to salute Goethe's memory and to recognize in it an imperishable testimony to what the human mind can accomplish when its desire for knowledge, that is for analysis and awareness, is combined with the power of understanding, that is to say, of harmonizing and reconciling. That, exactly, is the spirit which animates Unesco.*

*Unesco wishes to demonstrate its profound respect for a creative writer whose thirst for knowledge remained unquenched until his death, and whose whole existence was an heroic effort to achieve that inner balance, at the same time noble and constructive, which*

*men and nations only attain by vigilant insistence upon clear thinking and by seeking a culture that shall free them from their prejudices. Accordingly, Unesco had decided to publish a volume in which a number of distinguished thinkers, artists and writers will pay homage to the author of Faust and Wilhelm Meister.*

*Goethe was a great European. He was also a great universalist. He sought out extremes, not in order to delight in their opposition but to measure the distance between them and, as often as he could, to endeavour to span it with his genius. He cared passionately for every form of culture and his curiosity extended to every kind of scientific investigation. His human apprenticeship lasted until he was eighty. He never ceased to feel strongly that the essence of science and culture consists in the fact that they are benefits which only exist in so far as they are transmitted. Hence his determination to be an educator and hence his marvellous fitness for the rôle.*

*For Goethe, in fact, poetry and truth always implied certain educational and social purposes. Few recognized better than he the strength of the links between the three concepts which give Unesco its name: Science, Culture and Education. The work of Goethe convincingly demonstrates the value of these relationships, without which Unesco would have no reasons for existing.*

*Man, having reached the culmination of his individual growth, turns to the multitude of his fellowmen and appraises his message in terms of the benefit which they are able to derive from its meaning.*

*It would be a rare privilege for Unesco if a writer of your talent and authority would consent to write a few pages for the volume which Unesco desires to devote to Goethe's memory.*

The manuscripts have been collected and published in this volume.



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G O E T H E

by ERNST BEUTLER



“**N**ational hatred is something peculiar. You will always find it strongest and most violent where there is the lowest degree of culture. But there is a degree where it vanishes altogether, and where one stands to a certain extent *above* nations, and feels the weal or woe of a neighbouring people as if it had happened to one’s own”—so said Goethe to Eckermann in 1830.

The poet was eighty years old when he thus anew and of set purpose addressed himself to the nations, giving them the direction by which they should be guided. But the young Goethe had thought in precisely the same manner. Is it not finely symbolic, that the little boy’s first contact with the Western neighbour-nation—although in time of war and in spite of a thousand warring years between France and Germany—should have taken place under the auspices of art and not of arms? A delightfully peaceful, even idyllic atmosphere pervades the Third Book of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, in which this episode is related. During the Seven Years’ War, a French aristocrat, Comte Théas de Thoranc, takes up his quarters in the house of Goethe’s parents, in the *Grossen Hirschgraben*. It is evening. The officer asks to be shown round the house, in order to select the rooms he will need. The owner, Imperial Counsellor Goethe, leads the way, candle in hand.

Suddenly the Comte notices that they are in a room full of paintings. The walls are adorned with about a hundred pictures by contemporary Frankfurt artists, their dull-gold frames hung in serried ranks. Thoranc asks to have them lit up; and art proves to be the link of reconciliation which, despite the tense political situation of the day, brings about an atmosphere of understanding—and more than that, something creative and durable, to remain for centuries as a memorial of that hour. Pictures, that is to say, pictures which are still there for us to look at and which owe their origin to that meeting; pictures commissioned by the French Comte and painted for his house in Provence—but painted by German artists, and in young Goethe's home town.

Watteau, Boucher, or Fragonard—who, like Thoranc himself, was a native of Grasse, near Cannes—were the painters to whom the Comte's orders might have been expected to go. The King of Prussia adorned his castles with their works. They were the pride of the galleries at Versailles and Paris. So that in choosing the simple pictures of the German painters, the French aristocrat was making a gesture of revolt against this Court taste, and acting as the representative of a new era. None of these paintings depicted any fashionable Parisian beauty in the nude guise of a mythological figure; they showed children

in an idyllic landscape—children whose occupations varied with the months and the seasons. Nature, country life, the innocence of childhood—things called for by Rousseau, whom the comte admired—provided the theme of these German pictures; and regarded in this light, the Frenchman's order was a political prospectus in illustrated form. Above each painting, woven into a charming *genre* composition, is the zodiacal sign for that particular month—Fishes, Gemini, Virgin, Lion; but the dispositions by which our human existence should be governed are shown in the scenes beneath these constellations, which depict, from spring to winter, the various activities carried on in the country. These paintings, which were bought back from their French owners in 1907, now hang in the Garden Room of the Goethe Museum in Frankfurt which, in this present year, 1949, has been rebuilt from amid its bombed and fire-scarred ruins.

Nature—that was the rallying-call of the epoch heralded in France by Rousseau and in Germany by Goethe. In this name they became the two most celebrated writers of Europe. Until that time, German literature had been unknown to the rest of the continent. We have to go back as far as Luther to find a German writer whose name was in everyone's mouth. And then, in 1774, Goethe's *Werther* suddenly arrived, to become the most-read novel in

every country. A German book had entered world-literature; but at bottom, its success was due to a misunderstanding. What made so great an appeal to contemporary readers was not so much Werther's attitude towards Nature, as the passion of a love that was carried to the heights, plunged into the depths, and finally swept into death. And above all it was that death itself, the conscious and voluntary abandonment of life—here presented for the first time as the darkest, most bitterly-contested hour of decision that a man could face, and offered to the sympathy and tears of a civilization grown over-sensitive and soft. While the readers fell sick over this book—literary history records the Werther-sickness of the period—Goethe had found healing in it. The same thing was to happen again and again. In *Elective Affinities*, the author writes himself out of a passion that had been threatening the sanctity of the marriage-tie. But the world saw only the problem of the imperilled marriage, and stigmatized the book as a piece of libertinage. In *Faust*, the self-idolatry of a man greedy for knowledge and life is brought onto the stage. "Vom Himmel fordert er die schönsten Sterne / Und von der Erde jede höchste Lust." \* The public identified this Faust with his creator, and

\* "From heaven he demands the brightest stars,  
And from the earth its every strongest joy."



failed to see that the poem was a warning—just as “Tasso” is revealed in the long run as a warning, “a heightened Werther”, to whom applies in equal measure the poet’s admonition: “Follow me not”.

In his poetic writings, Goethe holds his own against the world. He portrays the dangers, but also the manner of overcoming them; for the peril and the defence had been ordained by Nature to take share in his soul from the beginning. So that when, for some reason or other, a poem remained unfinished—as in the case of his *Prometheus*—the misunderstanding is not entirely dispelled even to this day. The reader sees only the onset, the titanic defiance of fate, supposes it to be an unqualified self-portrait by the youthful Goethe, and fails to take into consideration the fact that in its further development, the drama would have led up to a quite different attitude.

Prometheus . . . that stormy destiny recorded in Greek mythology had drawn young Goethe far out of the narrow limits of his day, whose spirit was by no means one of defiance towards the gods; and this brings us fully into the mighty processes of the writer’s creative work. A work for whose purposes he would lay violent hands on the literature of other countries, transform the themes he chose and magnificently remould them, like some volcanic smith. It was a process of inhalation and exhalation, a

symphony in which every epoch and every literature were mingled. Goethe himself, as a very old man, recognized this manner of creating as the essential characteristic of his nature and as historically significant, when he said to Eckermann (31st January 1827):

“National literature is now rather an unmeaning term; the time of World-literature is at hand, and everyone must strive to hasten the approach of that epoch.” “The time is at hand”—this mysterious formula from Goethe’s stories is heard now as a rallying-call to creative minds in all countries.

This had begun remarkably early. In the very same year when the Frankfurt painter took over young Wolfgang’s attic as his studio, because it was high up and looked east, which made it the lightest room in the house, a company of French actors came to perform in the town, following the arrival of the French army of occupation. The eleven-year-old boy was thus able—without going far away from his own house, and thanks to the complimentary ticket issued to his grandfather the Mayor—to gain his first impression of French drama and Parisian acting; and he immediately transformed his experiences into personal creative work. The first play he wrote, with its princes, princesses and gods, was in the French style; and his first epic poem, *Josef*, written shortly

afterwards, was an imitation of the Old Testament. In his Leipzig period, France and ancient Israel were already to be supplemented by England, with its sensitive novels, and above all, Shakespeare. And in Strasburg, in discussions with Herder, the English playwright is represented as the perfection of poetry. "The Will of all Wills"—an entertainment was given, to honour his memory, in Goethe's home in Frankfurt, on October 14th, 1771. Music was provided by violins and flutes. It was the first Shakespeare celebration to be held in Germany. It echoed the first celebration, two years previously, of the poet in his own land, where his birthplace, Stratford-on-Avon, had organized a three-days' ceremony in September 1769. But whereas on that occasion David Garrick, the great Shakespearean actor, who presided over the festivities, had judged it necessary to end his speech on a defensive, protective note: "Whoever is an enemy of the poet, let him say so"—Goethe's cry was: "To-day we are honouring the memory of the greatest of travellers, and are thereby doing honour to ourselves." He marvels at the journey completed by that traveller: "Let us set out, gentlemen! The sight of one such valiant individual fires and raises our spirits more than would the gaping at some royal procession a thousand strong." The kingship of genius was placed above the kings of history.

“Let us set out, gentlemen!” Only a few weeks after this homage to Shakespeare, Goethe began to write his historical play, *Götz von Berlichingen*. Later came *Egmont*; then *Faust*. Anyone familiar with Shakespeare will recognize traces of the mighty Englishman in all three of those dramas.

But that Shakespeare speech contained some other phrases which should be quoted here: “The Greek theatre.—First as an interlude in the religious service, then solemnly political, these tragedies represented certain great actions of the Fathers of the people with the pure simplicity of perfection—arousing full and noble feelings in the souls of the audience, for the plays were themselves full and noble. And in what souls! Those of Greeks! I cannot quite grasp what that means, but I feel it, and for the sake of brevity I will refer you to Homer and Sophocles and Theocritus, who taught me to feel it.”

And thus were invoked the land and the race that from then on, and without any wavering, formed Goethe’s real spiritual home. For in that very speech he had temporarily rejected the French: in old age he expressed certain reservations in regard to the naturalism of Shakespeare; but “seeking with the soul for the Grecian land”—those words from his *Iphigenia* could be applied to Goethe until the day of his death. He invokes Helen, and unites her with

his Faust. Just as that scene is a phantasmagoria on the stage, so his picture of Greece was a dream of Greece; but what matters is that to him the dream was truth and reality. And so he drew everything that he could find of the great Greek traditions into his own creative sphere. Under the auspices of Shakespeare, he had opened, with Herder, a new epoch in the life of the German spirit: now, under the auspices of the Greeks, he was to open, with Schiller, the classical epoch. Its purest expression is reached in the "Helen" act of *Faust*. But this interlude, in which the rhythm and style of an Attic tragedy are carefully imitated to the smallest detail, is preceded by the "Classical Walpurgis-night", which also begins like a Greek scene, but ends in the style of a Spanish baroque drama. Calderon's play, *El major encanto Amor*, which was first performed in 1635 in the garden theatre of Buen Retiro, near Madrid, and which Goethe, in 1803, was planning to present in Weimar, provides the model for the triumphal procession of Galatea, travelling away across the sea in a carriage formed of an oyster-shell. But the sea-shore landscape is based on that of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1802). Aeschylus, Byron, Calderon, like Shakespeare before them, have all had to bring their tribute, in order that one of Goethe's mightiest stage creations should come into

being. It was in this sense that Goethe meant his words to be understood, when he said: "The epoch of world-literature is at hand."

The spirit recognizes no barriers. It breaks through the cramping limits of the present.

Wer nicht von dreitausend Jahren  
Sich weiß Rechenschaft zu geben  
Bleib im Dunkeln, unerfahren,  
Mag von Tag zu Tage leben.\*

Those lines are taken from *The Divan* which, like the campaign of a modern Alexandre, conquered the Orient for the Western lands. Here for the first time, at any rate in Germany, the circle of Christian culture opens, all-embracing, to draw in the East. The Mahomedan religion, the mysticism of the Sufis, the ambiguous versatility of Hafi, the intensity and the sun-worship of Persian ritual—from all of these Goethe takes and absorbs what is attune to his spirit. Thus the *Divan* becomes the receptacle of a piety that outlasts time.

Gottes ist der Orient,  
Gottes ist der Okcident.  
Nord und südliches Gelände  
Ruht im Frieden seiner Hände.\*\*

Goethe's poetry overspans the entire earth, like the dome of a great temple. Finally, in the last years of

his life, the Far East, too, was brought into his creative circuit, and there resulted the *Chinesisch-deutschen Jahres- und Tageszeiten*.

In 1946, a book of considerable importance was brought out for the delectation of scholars: *Goethe und die Weltliteratur*, by Fritz Strich, Professor of German Literature at Berne University. The writer brings much learning, and an intuition worthy of a water-diviner, to the investigation of the influence of foreign literature on Goethe, and inversely, Goethe's influence upon non-German literature; and he characterizes the traces of foreign inspiration in the poet's work, very felicitously, as "blessings received". Strich speaks of the rousing effect of English literature on Goethe, of the way in which Italy cultivated his taste and France gave form to his style. Spain he regards as fulfilling a theatrical mission and America a social one. In the East he sees a force at work which leads man to open his mind to the divine.

\* He who cannot of three thousand years  
Give an account to himself  
May remain in darkness, without experience,  
Living from day to day.

\*\* God's is the Orient,  
God's is the Occident.  
The northern and the southern lands  
Rest in the peace of his hands.

Just as Goethe gathered the literature of all times and all races to himself, in order to gain experience of the world, so in his turn he made an effect upon all the nations—startling them, influencing them, compelling them to define their attitude. Throughout the century there was an ebb and flow of approval and rejection of him—the rejection being sometimes expressed with acrimony. Spain, where even to-day there is not one Professor of German Literature, was perhaps the region where he found the least response of all. And when, in 1932, a Spanish voice was at last raised—that of Ortega y Gasset—Spain thought fit to disavow it. During Goethe's own day, the Northern nations accepted his romanticism; but his joyful change of direction towards Greece and the South was foreign to their nature; and finally, they took up the critical attitude of which Kierkegaard was the exponent. In Russia there has been a passionate alternation of "for" and "against"—a discussion continued from Pushkin, through Turgenev and Tolstoy to Dostoievski and on to Lunatcharski. In England, Byron, and still more Carlyle, strove to gain appreciation for the German writer, and Carlyle, through Emerson, made some effect on the United States. Deepest and most comprehensive of all was, from the very beginning, Goethe's influence on France. When the stir made by *Werther* began to die



down, Madame de Stael's book, *Germany*, published in London in 1813, drew attention to *Faust* and the Weimar poems, and opened the path for the acceptance of their author. To follow up in detail the discussions about Goethe that took place in France, would mean writing a literary history of that country in the nineteenth century. In China, students have applied themselves to the work of the aged Goethe from Kung-fu-tsi onwards; Japan has shown more interest in the young Goethe, studying him in the light of the Buddhist Kwannon-cult.

So Goethe's influence bestrides the world; but as a subject for argument, not for a unanimous paean of praise. How could it be otherwise, for even among his own people, even in Germany, periods of recognition have alternated with periods of adverse criticism. Only one thing has always and everywhere been recognized as impossible—and that is, to pass quietly by the poet, as though he were not there.

Goethe himself did not make things easy for the rest of the world. Only seldom does he appear as the proponent of a direct, progressive code of ethics. He perceives the differentiation of being. He seems to take back what he says. And how often he chooses silence rather than speech! "Do not bid me speak, bid me be silent ... No one says it save the wise man!"—"Stones are dumb teachers and make silent

pupils.”—“Of that and that I can speak only with God!”—But Goethe never ceased to speak with God, though he rather gives us an inkling of these conversations than allows us to overhear them.

It is precisely because all his work is written from a religious aspect, that its importance is assured; but the durability and depth of the effect it produces, are due to the fact that the ultimate things are never mentioned. The word fails him. That is the meaning of St. Augustine's: “*Nos initiatos credimus, in vestibulo haeremus*” (We believe we know the inner mysteries, but we are still only in the outer court). Goethe puts it in this way: “The idea, when it makes a direct appearance, in life, in reality, always arouses a kind of aversion, embarrassment, disgust, to which everyone responds by putting himself somehow on his guard.” The idea, that is, the divine element, which, when applied to everyday life, means our responsibility before God towards our fellow-creatures. Nothing could be more mistaken than to represent Goethe as an egoist or a subjectivist. Anyone who follows the record of his life, his letters, his conversation, will be amazed at the understanding, the tender feeling he shows, like a helpful brother, towards his fellows. Albert Schweitzer, in the speech he made on receiving the Goethe Prize of Frankfurt in 1928, acknowledges Goethe as his personal ideal in this respect.

# G O E T H E

A secret urge to teach is perceived, not only as an undercurrent in the poet's daily life, but as a vital cord in his writings:

Warum sucht' ich den Weg so sehnsuchtsvoll,  
Wenn ich ihn nicht den Brüdern zeigen soll?\*

These lines from *Die Geheimnisse*, an uncompleted epic dating from 1784, might be taken as the motto for Goethe's *Collected Works*. As he advanced in age, this urge to teach was more and more clearly revealed. It finally came to a climax in the description of the "Pädagogische Provinz" as an ideal educational establishment, the first article of whose creed was to be respect for one's fellow-men, and more particularly for the suffering.

The American inspiration, already mentioned, was not the first thing to awaken Goethe's social sense. It is true that he lived at a court, and served a prince; but he took advantage of this position to persuade his master to disband the army almost entirely, in order to diminish the taxpayers' burden; he opposed Karl August's passion for hunting, in order to save the peasants' crops; he took measures to stimulate trade and commerce; he made Weimar into an intellectual centre; and when, after Napoleon's defeat, the

\* Why did I seek the path so yearningly,  
If I were not to show it to my brothers?

question arose of giving the German States the constitution that had been promised to them, Weimar was the only one to summon a legislative assembly and give the people a share in the government.

All Goethe's writing bears the stamp of his awareness of social responsibility and his sympathy for the troubles of his fellow-men. *Werther* shows it only incidentally, by casual comments: "The humble people of the place know me already and are fond of me"; but judgement is passed on the people of rank, and aristocratic society bears the blame for Werther's death. Götz—says Brother Martin—is the man "whom Princes hate, and to whom the downtrodden turn in their need". Egmont is the idol of the common people: "He is adored by every province." *Iphigenie* is nothing more nor less than the gospel of pure humanity. *Herrmann und Dorothea*, before the death of its author, had already gained admission into every household; the lower and middle classes looked upon it as a song in praise of their particular virtues. Its contents made it a poem to be approved, too, by such a social reformer as Tolstoy. Goethe dealt with the problem of changing social conditions in his Revolution drama, *Die Natürliche Tochter*, and showed himself to be no defender of the established order of things. *Faust* may almost be said to end with the announcement of a social

programme. And *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* is a novel in which the living-conditions of the different classes are weighed against each other, and self-sacrifice, orderliness, and helpfulness are exacted even from the heretofore privileged members of society. Throughout the poet's work, until his extreme old age, ring echoes of the exhortation that he first uttered in his early years:

Edel sei der Mensch,  
Hülfreich und gut,  
Denn das allein  
Unterscheidet ihn  
Von allen Wesen,  
Die wir kennen.\*

When the hundredth anniversary of Goethe's death came round, on March 22nd, 1932, there were ceremonies held in Weimar such as had never before taken place in honour of a poet. Representatives of every nation came in homage to lay their wreaths on the coffin in the royal crypt. It was a gesture of peace after the horrors of a long war. But it was only a gesture, a recognition of the need for action, without the strength to complete it. It was an acknowledgement of the spirit; but all around there lowered the

\* Let man be noble,  
Helpful and kind,  
For that alone

Distinguishes him  
From all the beings  
Known to us.

demonic adversaries of everything spiritual. Before a year had gone by, the free world lay in servitude to those powers of primeval darkness. The horsemen of the Apocalypse, War, Pestilence and Famine, came surging over the earth; and if to-day, on the two-hundredth anniversary of Goethe's birth, representatives of every nation were again to assemble in Germany to pay their homage to him, they would find nothing but ruined cities and a shattered people. And should they wish to lay their wreaths in his birthplace at Frankfurt, as they did before on his grave at Weimar, they would find that birthplace itself become a grave. No ceremony will bring all nations to Germany this year; even the Germans will not hold any general ceremony. Instead, the various peoples will do homage in their own cities—the French in Paris, the English in London, the Italians in Rome, the Russians in Moscow, the Chileans in Santiago, the Brazilians in Rio de Janeiro, the North Americans in Aspen. And perhaps it is good that this should be so. In their own homeland, among their own people, they can and will give an immeasurably deeper significance to the ceremony, and much wider renown can be added to the poet's name.

Diplomats played by far the greatest part in the 1932 celebrations. Now, in the different countries, the lead is being taken by the Universities, as strong-

G O E T H E

holds of the spirit. "Make it your purpose to travel", is the Friend's maxim in *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahren*. And now, as it were, Goethe's spirit has set forth to travel throughout the world.

Denn die Bände sind zerrissen,  
Das Vertrauen ist verletzt.

And from the same song sung by the traveller:

Dass wir uns in ihr zerstreuen,  
Darum ist die Welt so gross.

But above all, Goethe's admonition to us and to all peoples:

Und dein Streben, sei's in Liebe,  
Und dein Leben sei die Tat.\*

But in Frankfurt, on the site where Goethe's birth-place once stood, a new house is being built, a faithful copy of the old one, and using, so far as possible, the old stones. It will symbolize the manner in which Goethe's memory and influence survive every cataclysm; it is to be a spiritual fortress, as Fritz von Unruh, winner of the Goethe Prize for 1948, said—a memorial to the poet who was not only the

\* For the bonds are broken,      That we may scatter through it,  
Trust is wounded.              Therefore is the world so wide.

And let thy striving be in love,  
And let thy life be the action.

spokesman of the "Sturm und Drang" period, but also, and more, one who stood for moderation and the middle way—a philosopher, a pioneer in all true humanitarianism, and the silent priest of pure devoutness.

The generation that celebrated 1932 has proved unequal to its task. May it be a good omen that youth headed the ceremonies that marked the beginning of the reconstruction of Goethe's birthplace. The young people concerned were those who had come to Frankfurt to attend an international conference presided over by André Gide. After the Mayor and the French writer had ratified their dedicatory speeches by striking three hammer-blows on the foundation-stone, this gesture was repeated by the young people, in the name of their various lands and races. May these newcomers uphold their convictions more faithfully, more courageously, more manfully than did the generation of 1932!

*(Translated from the German)*



G O E T H E  
A N D T H E C O N C E P T  
O F J U S T I C E

by CARL J. BURCKHARDT



Goethe—that Roman of Germanic nationality—is one of the few German thinkers to have accepted our human condition and submitted to it wisely, without metaphysical rebellion.

He had the seeing eye, and drew felicitous inspiration from every visible form. To the very end of his long life, he never ceased to think of time as something sacred and precious, to be put to the fullest use. Beneath a calm that was merely apparent, his attention remained for ever on the alert; nothing escaped that prodigious receptivity.

An old-style piety, together with that sense of the marvellous which he had learnt from the Greeks, inclined him to respect men and things; and his respect conferred a particular dignity upon them.

It has been said that his person and his writings possessed all the qualities lacking to his nation: yet it was from that nation that he drew his strength.

He wrote the drama of impatience, of insatiable avidity, of the deceptive mirage; the drama of disgust and boredom; of the insurgent or the diligent will, of directed but blind system; the dramas of the magician, the seducer, the tyrant, the slaves; the drama, too, of the all-powerful State, with its weapons and its wiles; the drama of technique and of the treasures that it amasses; and the void that

lies beyond all these things. He wrote the drama of *Faust*, and it was the work of his whole life.

Himself a man of patience, of untiring effort, he compelled himself to moderation. He transformed his passions, even his moods of violence, into creative qualities. He was a fair-minded man. He stands out as the figure of a great mediator.

But there is one mistake that we should carefully avoid: the mistake of representing his life as a kind of didactic poem, in which Dionysius is defeated by Apollo—a poem in two parts, showing us first of all a foolhardy lad, attached to this world, heedless of the dangers which the powers of the underworld were constantly putting in his path; an uncivilized, iconoclastic lad, whose sojourn in Italy was suddenly to transform him into an enlightened, rational, sober Latin.

In reality, Goethe's personality cannot be thus divided; but in it there always existed a sharp, painful contradiction, such as exists in nature herself, each of whose separate elements, by conflicting with the others, finally, in mysterious liberty, makes its contribution to the unity of the whole.

In him, every impression, however fleeting, every experience, every state of mind, retains its individual aspect; and in his joys or sorrows he first of all takes note of these aspects—he does not make an

immediate summing-up. He, the contemporary of Hegel, who, in his German land, witnesses the birth of so many systems, keeps himself apart; he sees and thinks as a poet. His will represents, as it were, a great passive force. His mind is open to diversity, which he seeks and desires; he also looks upon it as being of value to society.

He never stops short when confronted with some phenomenon; he avoids the caesura, and the dramatic climax. Sensitive to the progression, the transfiguration of things, he accompanies them in their movement, and, travelling through their successive forms, he comes naturally to a perception of their meaning. What appears in him to be wilful, is the attentive intelligence which he devotes to analysis, by his choice of detail, and to synthesis, through poetic imagery.

He has been called Protean, and accused of irresolution in his attitude towards basic problems. And indeed, it is only by examining his entire work, the whole body of his statements, that we can discover his unalloyed thought, his conception of truth. He yields himself only to those who pursue him to the last ditch. There are no pickings to be had from his works.

That is why it is useless to cite his writings in support of any particular doctrine or belief. Goethe is a

product of the tremendous confusion that resulted from the Renaissance and the Reformation. One's first impression is that he borrows from all sides and expresses himself in all languages. Attempts have been made to represent him as an adversary of Christianity, but he is a Christian in his own fashion; to quote him when putting forward some particular interpretation of the ancient mysteries, or some Rosicrucian form of mysticism; to range him on the side of paganism in general; or to invoke him in support of some lesson of Hindu doctrine, fresh-distilled, according to the Orientalists' teaching, by Schopenhauer or Schelling. But he does homage to no doctrine; he absorbs them all. He follows neither Spinoza nor his pantheism; he first assimilates these things, then he reacts energetically.

And again, it is through his capacity for transformation that he frees himself. He remains free under the pressure of his own people who, at the first dawn of nationalism, seek to draw him into the terrible venture to which they had been tempted by Napoleon:

"How could I, to whom culture and barbarism are alone of importance, hate the French nation, which is among the most cultivated of the earth, and to which I owe so great a part of my own cultivation? Altogether, national hatred is something peculiar.

You will always find it strongest and most violent where there is the lowest degree of culture. But there is a degree where it vanishes altogether, and where one stands to a certain extent *above* nations, feeling the weal or woe of a neighbouring people as if it had happened to one's own. This degree of culture was agreeable to my nature, and I had become confirmed in it long before my sixtieth year."

The present and fleeting hour neither carries him away nor absorbs him; it runs its course without altering his personal rhythm. Always, passionately, his hope is fixed on that order of beauty conceived by the Greeks, a pre-established order whose laws he strove to discover; he did not fear to place his trust in that justice which passes our understanding, and which must be absolute. He could say with the Greeks too, and with St. Thomas, the greatest Christian of Hellenic mould:

*θεὸς οὐδεὶς γεόμετροι*

Our epoch can hardly forgive this spiritualistic philosopher for his continual seeking after harmony; this inventor of plant morphology, this admirer of all kinds of slow, organic transformation, for his dislike of conflict, and above all for the appearance of serenity that enfolds him.

\* Conversations with Eckermann, March 14th, 1850, referring to the year 1815.

Yet his soul was invaded, almost torn apart, by every kind of strife; he was attacked by every sort of despair. But he looked far ahead; and other people's conflicts sometimes appeared trifling to him. He was more aware than anyone of the dangers that threatened the Germans, dangers that lurked behind the appearance of genius, in those dominating and stirring spirits who bore within them the principle by which they were to perish. That is why he avoided that tragic individual, Heinrich von Kleist, a writer whose work was a series of masterpieces, but who rejected happiness and was desperately drawn by the heroism of a tragic end. He avoided, too, the purest of all German poets, Hölderlin, observing the bewildering excesses of that angel lost in the borderland of madness, and respecting them. — For he knew angels and demons: he had met with men who were possessed, he had predicted their coming. And the visionary had written these prophetic words:

“The agents of the infernal powers are not always remarkable for intelligence and talent, and they are rarely distinguished by kindness of heart; but a terrible force radiates from them, their power is exerted over all living creatures and even over the elements. Who can say how far such influence extends? The combined forces of morality can avail nothing against them. The most clear-sighted



people strive in vain to discredit them, to expose them as in equal measure self-deceived and deceivers of others; the masses are blindly attracted towards them. Such individuals are rare, and they cannot be overcome save by the universe itself, against which they set themselves. Hence that strange and immensely significant proverb: *Nemo contra deum nisi deus ipse.*"

Dostoevski's demons are drawn from the same experience, and the poets' vision is often surpassed by the reality. "The demoniac element", says Goethe, "forms no part of my nature, but I am subject to its action."

Eckermann one day asked him, in his usual ingenuous manner: "Has Mephistopheles any demoniac features?" And Goethe replied: "No, Mephisto is an entirely negative being, whereas the devil is always creative."

Mephisto, who is an intellectual, spreads doubt, jealousy and resentment around him. He is a tempter as well, but in the service of death, not of life. The devil, on the contrary, is irrational; he brings about good as well as evil, and the one by means of the other. "When faced with him" says the poet, "our human nature must make a firm stand."

In *The Elective Affinities*, Goethe gives personality to "the forces that condition us", naming them Daemon, Tyche, and Makarie.

The Daemon, man's guardian spirit, is under the sway of Tyche, who is simply the "habitus" of the school men, a haphazard power, an individual token, transitory and perishable. As for Makarie, the poet tells us that she is able to read the true nature of every being, to look through his mask to his innermost essence. The drama of our existence is played out between these three elemental forces.

"Our life, the whole *cosmos* that surrounds us", writes Goethe, "is made up of liberty and necessity together. Our will is merely the anticipatory revelation of that which we are fated to accomplish. The object of our will is within us; the "how" is seldom left to our decision; as for the "why", we are not permitted to know it; so we are obliged to fall back on the *quia*." Our freedom goes as far as our thought, our knowledge, to meet the divinity which awaits us in silence. Faust, by his blasphemy, alters the first premise of Genesis. For the *logos* he substitutes the act of will. Faust commits the sin against the Holy Ghost; and the poet, throughout his works, constantly reminds us of the consequences of this perilous substitution. He reminds us of the nihilism towards which it irresistibly impels. For Goethe, action is good only if, guided by thought, it arises out of love: *Ordo amoris*. And supreme happiness consists, for the poet, in thought which brings us nearer to a

knowledge of God. For him, as for the mediaeval thinkers, the second cardinal virtue is justice; the third, without which we can have no freedom of thought, is courage, *fortitudo*, resistance to evil, the sovereign choice of the conscience.

It has sometimes been claimed that Goethe, having deified personality, originated the concept of Titanism and foreshadowed that of the Superman. We have been surfeited with quotations from certain passages of the *Divan*, that work of his maturity and his old age, in which his style recovers all its radiant strength, its confidence and vigour:

Volk und Knecht und Überwinder,  
 Sie gestehn zu jeder Zeit,  
 Höchstes Glück der Erdenkinder  
 Sei nur die Persönlichkeit.\*

So says Suleika to her lover; but Hatem's reply is overlooked: identifying himself with his beloved, he is merged in her, and it is only in Suleika that, henceforth, he can find his own *self*. Even if she should decide to bestow her heart elsewhere, he will not shrink from identifying himself by turn with each of those whom she loves. Relinquishment, reciprocal immanence in a sphere where the individual, the

\* People, thralls and conquerors  
 All declare, at all times,  
 That the supreme happiness of mortals  
 Consists in personality.

personality in quest of perfection, are no longer of the least importance—where love is everything.

*Ordo amoris*: “Every living creature”, says Goethe, “is simply one note in a great symphony ; it must be considered as a whole, lest each isolated element become a dead letter.” And again: “This is the token of divinity in the organization of the world : regarded in its own place and time, each individual item assumes an importance equal to that of the whole.” And elsewhere: “Let no one judge himself to be small by comparison with a greater than he.”

Thus, in Goethe’s eyes every being, every moment of time, attains an absolute value, each one is “the representative of an eternity”.

It is this respect which he feels for all created things, that lies at the root of his concept of justice.

In one of his plays, *The Natural Daughter*—almost unknown to the general public and which is in fact only a draft—there occurs a passage of great significance, though it may seem obscure and is difficult to translate. One of the characters, a judge, says—and it is the poet himself who speaks:

In abgeschlossenen Kreisen lenken wir  
Gesetzlich streng, das in der Mittelhöhe  
Des Lebens wiederkehrend Schwebende.  
Was droben sich in ungemessenen Räumen  
Gewaltig seltsam, hin und her bewegt

G O E T H E

Belebt und tötet, ohne Rat und Urteil,  
Das wird nach anderm Mass, nach andrer Zahl  
Vielleicht berechnet – bleibt uns rätselhaft.\*

But the schemer, the evil spirit, declares :

Und was uns nützt, ist unser höchstes Recht.

And the poet replies :

Und so verleugnet ihr das Göttlichste  
Wenn euch des Herzens Winke nichts bedeuten.\*\*

Here again we find the poet's conscience, always attentive to the counsel which comes, hardly audible, from those lofty spheres to which he refers in veiled terms.

There is a fundamental duality in his spirit : he knows the Angels and the Devil ; he knows good and evil.

\* We can guide into confined channels,  
By rigorous laws, that which ebbs and flows  
In the middle reaches of life.  
That which, above us, in unbounded space,  
Powerfully strange, hither and thither moves,  
Animates or slays, without thought or judgement,  
Perhaps is reckoned by other weights and measures—  
It remains a mystery to us.

As will be seen, this attempt at a translation is merely a feeble approximation. It shows that Goethe's poetic form eludes any such transposition. (*Translator.*)

“What serves our interests is our highest due.”

\*\* And thus you deny all that is most divine,  
When you ignore the promptings of the heart.

Goethe is not of our time ; he marks the close of an epoch that had its source in Greek thought, in the great revealed religions and in humanism. He is not of our time, because he is an *amateur*, in the true sense of the word, and one of the most eminent of all amateurs ; he is "*anti-professional*", as were the Greeks—and the English too, at their best periods. Tireless worker as he was—this poet, scholar, great administrator, statesman—he dreaded *labor improbus*, and avoided it.

In his speech at the Sorbonne on April 30th, 1932, during the celebrations which marked the centenary of Goethe's death, Paul Valéry said : "A few men give an idea—or an illusion—of what the world, and more especially Europe, might have become, if political power and the power of the spirit had been able to merge together—or at least to establish a firmer relationship.

"Of these few men, I discern some in the XIIth and XIIIth centuries. Others of their number produced the ardour and splendours of the Renaissance. The last of them, born in the XVIIIth century, shared their death-bed with the last hopes of a certain form of civilization, founded chiefly on the myth of Beauty and on that of Knowledge—both invented by the ancient Greeks.

"Goethe is one of them. I will say at once that I

see no others after him. After him we find circumstances becoming less and less favourable to the singular and universal greatness of individuals."

Goethe knew this, and he says as much to his friend Zelter, the musician, in his celebrated letter about the nineteenth century : \*

"Nowadays, young people are seized and disturbed far too soon : and the whirlwind is already sweeping them away . . . What is it that everyone in this world covets or seeks to acquire? Wealth, ease, the rapidity of transport and communication . . . The sole aim of the civilized world, in its progress, is to surpass itself, to accumulate knowledge, and thereby to settle into mediocrity. And what is the result of these efforts? An average, generally-disseminated, culture. This is the century of clever minds, quick to assimilate, practical ; the century of those who believe themselves to be outstanding by virtue of their ability, but who will never attain to the highest values . . .

"Let us therefore, so far as possible, remain faithful to the conceptions in whose light we have grown up and lived. Soon, with a few—a very few—others, we shall be the last survivors of an age which will not return for a long time."

Indeed, the 1930's were an inauspicious period for

\* Goethe to Zelter, June 1825 (No. 462 of the Insel edition, Leipzig, 1915).

recalling that great figure. The erudite deference of the official speeches of commemoration was mingled with hatred, following in the rut that had been hollowed out during the last century. Goethe was pilloried, executed; he had become a bourgeois, a slandered bourgeois; had he not assassinated Schiller, the man who believed him his friend?

But although, nowadays, Goethe's manner of thinking seems to be under a cloud, his words will live, for they are imperishable in their essence, they contain the only secret of immortality that mankind possesses: poetry, that beauty and that quality of form which can preserve or resuscitate, and which are stronger than oblivion.

Goethe built up the majestic edifice of his works in the most elusive of all materials—light—and the most durable of all—the granite and basalt for which he searched throughout nature, with no thought of altering her framework or her laws.

Merquès, near Cahors, 15th—23rd April, 1949.

*(Translated from the French)*



G O E T H E  
A N D G E R M A N Y

by BENEDETTO CROCE



It has been shrewdly observed that great poets, far from being the interpreters and representatives of their own people, are their antithesis—their critics, correctors and integrators. Remember Dante and the Florentines, as he himself saw them ; Cervantes and his Spanish contemporaries, crazy about knight-errantry ; Shakespeare and the English—proverbially correct and cold, which his dramas certainly are not ; and Goethe, serene, well-balanced and thoroughly human, in contrast to his Germans—a warlike and fanatical race, serious and hard-working, admittedly, but with a considerable share of pedantry. Nor was Goethe to the taste of the politically-minded among his own people, who more than once showed that to his supreme genius they preferred a poet of the second rank such as Schiller. And when the German national tradition was intensified to the point of delirium, and the first centenary of Goethe's death arrived in 1932, the demonstrations were prepared with a lack of enthusiasm which clearly revealed the gulf, the estrangement, that separated him from what had then become Hitler's Germany.

And now that misfortune has smitten his great nation—great in its many virtues, its talents and its energy—and at the same time has smitten Europe, thus deprived of a force essential to its balance and situated in its geographical centre, what better can

Germany do, at this centenary of the death of her mighty poet, than to raise herself towards him in spirit, accept his message and reflect on it anew, with such devotion and sincerity that it shall restore light to the minds and human feeling to the hearts of his countrymen ?

I did not accept the invitation to participate in the honours shown to Goethe in Germany in 1932, for they seemed to me to be insincere. But I turned again to his books and re-read them, and continued to write critical studies about them, as I had done during the first world war, when Germany was fighting against Italy, as I did again during the second war when Italy, having become Fascist, was allied to a Germany that had become Nazi; and as I continued to do at the end of the war, amid the political tasks that I had accepted. And always there came to me from Goethe comfort and serenity and courage, because he always carried me beyond and above the things of the day—which is the only way of achieving real union with them, of loving and serving them. But it was no longer possible for me to speak openly and directly with the Germans—I mean with those Germans who, like myself, were concerned with philosophy and history and poetry—as I had been used to do in the pre-1914 days, exchanging ideas and suggestions and forming precious and unforgettable

friendships with them. And when, in 1936, a Swiss paper asked me to express my opinion about the Germany of that day—which had recently caused a great scandal by having, among other things, altered the names of its cultural publications (for instance, transforming the *Review of Cultural Philosophy* into the *Review of German Cultural Philosophy*), and had removed from the pediment of Heidelberg University the inscription, *To the Living Spirit*, replacing it by: *To the German Spirit*—I sent that Swiss paper an article inspired by the feeling of Goethe, who always detested the idea and the expression *Deutschtum*, and to which I gave the title of “The Germany we used to love”. This article could not be published in Germany, or even discussed by my friends there ; and for this reason I should like to explain here what was its governing idea—one which I still accept and firmly uphold.

Why on earth—I wondered at that time and I still wonder—are the Germans obsessed by the notion that their great period, to be remembered as a perpetual ideal, was that of primitive Germany, of the barbarian invasions that carried fire and sword into the Roman Empire and enslaved its citizens ? Why do they so deeply love and so nostalgically yearn after an epoch in which the course of history led them to play the part of the hurricane and the earthquake ?

The true history of the Middle Ages, in its positive aspect, was not such : it was not that of Germanism, but of the Church of Rome, which, with faith and Christian feeling, had carried on the Roman Empire, raising it to the spiritual level—and that of the classical culture and the Roman law, which survived and gradually regained strength until they culminated in the Renaissance in which the Germans themselves had some share. It was, indeed, a learned German who, in 1839, hearing Alessandro Manzoni refer with horror and distress to the passivity and powerlessness with which the Italians had submitted to their Lombard conquerors, pointed out to him that on the contrary, it was the Italians who had then proved themselves victorious and powerful—for they had imposed their own language, manners and customs upon the Lombards and completely transformed their mode of thinking and feeling . . . retaining nothing of what had been theirs, save—as though for the sake of historical anecdote—their name, which was bestowed upon one of the most completely Italian of Italy's provinces. I imagine that no serious student of mediaeval history would to-day give credit to the boasting and laudatory statements concerning primitive Germany and its mighty creative originality which were so much in vogue during the Romantic period—just as no man of common-sense, even if he

is not a student of physiology, believes any longer in the miraculous or fanciful rejuvenation brought about by the transfusion of Germanic blood into the worn-out veins of the Latin race. Leopold Ranke, reviewing in his mind's eye the colossal figures of the barbarian chieftains and German emperors that the Romantic historians were so fond of and depicted so lovingly, could already murmur with a smile : "Too virile, and consequently puerile !"

The great period in which Germany should take pride is that in which she possessed such a poet as Wolfgang Goethe, who belongs to the small company that is headed by Homer, together with thinkers who to this very day are still masterly and up to date—Kant and Hegel and a few others, such as Jacobi, that very noble genius, who deserve to share their high place—and historians and philologists who put fresh life into the study of language and history ; not to mention scientists, physicists and mathematicians. Certainly—you will say—the Germans take great pride in that period when their country was centred on Weimar, even if they are unable to cease loving the other extreme of Potsdam, to which their souls are secretly attracted. Yes, they do take pride in it. But even when they do so with complete sincerity, they do not—if I may be permitted to say so—properly understand its origin and purpose : they regard

it as belonging entirely to Germany, or as a specifically German reaction to and rebellion against the culture of Europe as a whole. Whereas anyone who really knows it and has thoroughly investigated it, is aware that, on the contrary, Goethe's *Lieder* were rendered possible by the literary refinement that Germany had acquired in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries from the Italian and French schools of literature and versification . . . just as there has never been any philosophical, philological or historical discovery made in Germany that has not had its precedent and its beginning in Italy, France, England, or some other country of Europe. What was peculiar to Germany in the age of Weimar was a galaxy of outstanding minds, such as can only be entirely equalled, perhaps, in the Greece of Pericles' day. Germany was thus able to exert in the world of ideas a hegemony which was conferred upon her, not by her *Deutschtum*, her Germanism, but by her *Europeatum*, or rather by that world-spirit which, at other periods of modern history, had conferred the same hegemony upon Renaissance Italy or upon the France of Descartes and Louis XIV, and without which it would have been valueless or inexistent. The Germany of those days was the legitimate daughter of Europe, taking over the management of the ancient house—not a daughter shut out like a foundling, and



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filled with rancour, desire for revenge, and the spirit of destruction and self-assertion. And now this well-deserved and much-desired hegemony returns to her, in conformity with the new feelings and needs of the human race, for the good of us all ; and all of us will greet her with emotion and admiration ; and our gratitude will perhaps be so great as to make us forget how much of our own strength we have had to give out, in order to revive her and support her so that she should completely fulfil her mission and not, in her turn, yield up the hegemony to another nation which has meanwhile been preparing for the call, as is required by the vicissitudes of things human.

*(Translated from the Italian.)*



T H E  
P R E S I D E N T O F  
E U R O P E

by JAROSLAW IWASZKIEWICZ



A mong the explorers of that immense world, Goethe, two tendencies are evident. On the one hand there are those who, ignoring the importance of his private life, find interest only in his work. On the other hand, there are those who hold the contrary view and consider that his life is the thing that counts . . . that masterpiece of balance and boldness, of tranquillity and passion. For my part, I think we do best to consider his life and work as a whole; those moments when his deepest sentiments are set in motion and his deepest experiences are imaged on the screen of eternity.

We hear a great deal about Goethe's humanism, about the innumerable facets of his genius, his insatiable intellectual curiosity. It seems to me that he was a man cast in one single mould, all of a piece, and that it is unwise to lay this stress upon his diversity. For that is to reduce his greatness to the mere sum-total of many trifling actions—to divide the ellipse of his trajectory into an infinite number of straight lines; and that can give no adequate idea of his trajectory, or of his greatness.

Wherein does Goethe's greatness lie? In his understanding of all that goes to make up man? In his complete absence of verbiage? It used to be customary to contrast Goethe and Schiller, and indeed that is often done even nowadays. Schiller sings the praises of

Liberty, but his bourgeois revolutionism seems a little pompous, compared to the steadfast serenity with which Goethe awaits whatever life may hold in store. Goethe could rise above the chauvinism of a "war of liberation" and look at Napoleon with a steady eye. He could understand the policy of world government and perceive what was great in it. He knew the value of philosophy and the value of investigating nature. Schiller was not unwise to counsel him against reading Kant, for whom he himself had such veneration. Goethe must remain with Spinoza and his pantheism. But Goethe was to outstrip both Spinoza and Kant. Is that where his greatness lies ?

No—or so it seems to me. That is only one aspect of his greatness. But where Goethe is unique, where he surpasses all others, is in the fact that, having within himself material to furnish forth a dozen great men, being at one and the same time statesman, politician, psychologist, philosopher, scientist, investigator, lover, and delighting as he did in the pleasant things of this world ("ein Geniesser")—being all this at the same time, he chose poetry and set it above all else. He is a poet first and foremost, and his poetry, raised up on the immense pedestal of his virtues, takes on a superhuman aspect. It dazzles us.

"In Goethe"—writes André Suarès—"over-

topping the ten men who dwell within him, the poet is the greatest, the one who binds the whole sheaf together.”

Poetry, with Goethe, represents something greater than thought or political creation. It is the flower plucked on the highest peaks ever scaled by humanity, the most perfect expression of European culture. Goethe sees everything realistically, subjects it to a long period of intellectual incubation, and shows it to us at last through the crystal prism of art. Those are, as it were, the three steps of his pedestal. Sainte-Beuve says: “The characteristic of Goethe was his range, which amounted to universality. A great naturalist and poet, he studied every object, and saw it simultaneously in its real and in its ideal form.”

Goethe is not merely—as we hear repeated with wearisome frequency—a great European. Goethe is also a German. The whole rhythm of his intellectual proceeding, the very height of his skill, consists in harmonization, conciliation, in the transfiguration of discord into tunefulness. The whole of *Faust* is one slow progression, from the suicidal mood of the first scene to the deification in the last. The juxtaposition of the beginning and the end—that end which forms the most tremendous and most unexpected of all “happy endings” to be found in art—is not without significance. While Goethe is looked upon as one of

the loftiest figures of European culture, people are too much inclined to forget that he was also a lofty figure of German culture—that before him there had been Winckelmann, Lessing, and Herder. Goethe's rare skill was expressed in his successful conciliation of what was German with what was European. And more still in his accentuation of what was German, without disturbing the general rhythm of continental culture.

The unity of Europe, of that Europe which is now coming to birth, does not consist in a mere unification; a cosmopolitan European is something essentially tedious and valueless. Europe is what it is because it contains Germany and France, Poland and Russia. It is not an imaginary unity but the sum-total of several different unities. It is in the interests of Europe that a Frenchman shall be French, that a Pole shall be Polish, and that, in spite of this, he shall feel himself to be closely akin to the group, and shall understand the others.

Goethe is as profoundly German as possible, whether in spirit or in action. Even his characteristic boldness is German.

That Germany is an anarchist, chaotic, eccentric nation, we have only recently had terrible proof. The history of this nation follows the most wavering line imaginable. The aspirations of its leaders are



always shattered by certain centrifugal forces. That is why German order and organization are external, imposed by the unattainable dream of an internal order. The number of notices written up in German railway-stations, streets and roads is in inverse proportion to the amount of real order existing in the foggy German psyche.

And that is why Goethe's clarity, that classic differentiation of the elements of the universe, stands as the incarnation of the inaccessible ideal of Germany. He has been called "the last of the Greeks". I should have been inclined to call him "the last of the Germans". After him the Prussian victories begin. We know now what they have brought us.

But was this spirit, itself so clear, quite unacquainted with suffering? What, after all, is the last part of the second *Faust*? What, after all, is *Faust*, that veritable journal of God, as someone has called it?

Sainte-Beuve maintains that Goethe understood all things, save two: Christianity and heroism. I think he is unjust. It is quite true that Goethe, that saint of freemasonry, held a not too favourable view of Christianity in general. But he had too much regard for what was constructive, he was too alien to everything destructive, not to appreciate the pre-eminently constructive part played by the Catholic Church. He was also obliged to accept the fact of that Protestantism

amidst which he lived and thought. But I should like to refer to another aspect of Goethe—that Goethe who is too often described as “Olympian”, “classic”, “last of the Greeks”, without awareness of the current of mysticism which shimmers—far down in the depths of his poetry.

I have already said that, in my opinion, the principal task undertaken by Goethe was that of integration, of orchestration into unity. And mysticism could not be omitted from that unity. Like the mediaeval Rosicrucians, Goethe strove to bring about the fusion of happiness and maturity—the intoxication of the “iridescent earth”—with a very profound sense of the mystic. Incidentally, he dedicated a little-known and unfinished poem, *Die Geheimnisse*, to the Rosicrucians.

It is difficult to regard the last scene of *Faust* as a mere literary flourish, a pirouette intended to give a convenient solution to an awkward situation, like the grand finale of an opera. This scene, which is free of all theatrical artifice, arises naturally from the internal development of the poem. It is a deeply thought-out and deeply-experienced finale, a finale in the true Christian tonality. Something quite unique. This scene cannot be passed over in silence, and nothing is gained by contrasting it with the *Roman Elegies* or the *Divan*. It is one of the

pinnacles of Goethe's work—where, in a manner that to us comes as a surprise, but which is deliberate and consistent in his view, he becomes our Mystic Father.

It may be that this disturbs the image of Goethe that we have built up for ourselves. Perhaps this mysticism is somewhat veiled by the sun-like radiance of his face; perhaps his vesperal Catholicism makes us forget the paganism of the daylight hours, but it seems to me that the man becomes thus even more perfect, more human, more classic. Just as the mystic currents of ancient Greece, which are now well known, have enriched for us the image of "sunny Hellas" by showing it bathed in dim moonshine, ringed with the halo of a mysterious presence, so Goethe's mysticism lights up for us the vertiginous depths of his existence.

There is one of Goethe's books that is known only to a limited circle, but which lies infinitely close to the heart of every poet. It is perhaps the quintessence of Goethe's poetry—that narrow but very beautiful oriental scarf which binds together, as it were, the sheaf of his wisdom and his human experience.

That many-coloured intermingling, the *Oriental Divan*, is like an alliance between Europe and Asia. Freed from all barriers and contradictions, we can communicate with the men over there by one means—the voice of poetry. Its language is common to us

all, accessible and precise, whether it expresses love, nostalgia, or the communion of friendship. Those are human elements.

And Goethe put so much of himself into these translations and adaptations, he drew so much new beauty from those forgotten poets of the East, he moored his eighteenth century with such success to the long-past centuries of Persia and Arabia, he fused all this poetry into such incomparable charm !

And that is one of the most important things about Goethe. He never encloses himself in one atmosphere alone, he never rejects any one of the innumerable possibilities offered to him. *Faust* and the *West-östlicher Divan* simultaneously—and that at a time when political upheavals must have been turning his thoughts towards other concerns. We of to-day are little inclined to reproach Goethe for his lack of interest in political and state affairs; but he wrote his oriental poems—which are so “abstract”, full of charm, and indeed beautiful, although a little too “aesthetic”—in 1814 to 1815, when Germany was fighting for her life as a nation, when the new map of Europe was being drawn up, and the earthquake was rumbling beneath Germany, beneath the whole continent of Europe. Yet we call him today, and rightly, a great German, a great European.

Goethe is one of the few poets who “found



Roux

Madame

Lyon, le 18. 1825.

La passion amène les souffrances!  
 Qui soulageroit  
 Un coeur opprimé, éprouvant une  
 trop grande perte?  
 Les plus beaux jours évanouissent  
 trop vite.  
 Envais tant de bonheur, et c'est si  
 approprié  
 L'esprit est effrayé, les intentions  
 confuses  
 Et les sens n'apparçoivent plus,  
 qu'un monde effacé.

La Musique d'abord aux ailes  
 angéliques,  
 Entrelaçant ses dons de mille ra-  
 mille,  
 Penètre l'homme, raviver le  
 restaurant,  
 Le surchargeant de perfections  
 nouvelles.  
 Son oeil se mouille, il sent au  
 même moment  
 Le prix divin des sons comme  
 des larmes

Oh! si le coeur tout soulagé, s'aggraveait bien vite:  
 Qu'il ait encore, qu'il bat, qu'il voudrait jeter...  
 Qu'il voudrait, reconnaissant pour tant de biens,  
 L'offrir soimême en tribut volontaire.  
 Et sentirait alors — ah! quel cas pour toujours!  
 Le bonheur double des sons et de l'amour.

M. R.  
 Le 18. 1825.

Goethe



salvation". The others are mighty, but damned, crushed in their own rebellions and struggles, condemned to everlasting regrets. He alone aims consciously at the grand finale. "The desire to raise the pyramid of my existence to the greatest possible height is foremost with me—I never forget it for a moment", he writes in one of his letters. When Mickiewicz met him, Goethe was already at the summit of that pyramid, and from the heights he had reached, he gazed down, like a blind eagle, at the tides of the worlds:

"... und Fels und Meer wird fortgerissen  
In ewig schnellem Sphärenlauf ..."

For me, indeed, the most dramatic moment of all is when our Polish Mickiewicz visited Weimar. The young foreign poet, "the friend of Madame Szymanowska", was for Goethe a man like any other; after a moment he would turn away his eyes from the contemplation of that suffering, and fix them on some other of the perfect creations offered to the gaze of the wise man.

The terrible and tormented life of Mickiewicz concerns him only inasmuch as terror and torture reflect the eternal laws of the universe. Goethe's impassive calm comes, as well, from the fact that he knows how easy it is to be just, and that what matters is not justice itself, but the longing for justice. Mickiewicz,

young and unsatisfied, as yet little acquainted with suffering, not yet Christ nor emissary of the Christ among nations, contrasts with Goethe by all that is young, fresh and new in Polish culture.

It was as the representative of a new form of European culture that Mickiewicz visited Goethe at Weimar. Goethe was at that time neither the German councillor nor even the German dramatist. There came forward to meet Mickiewicz he whom Thibaudet calls the President of Europe—it was Europe which, personified by the author of *Faust*, greeted Slav thought and culture, personified by the future Professor of Slavonic Literature at the Collège de France. Mickiewicz—a friend of Russia, an admirer of Goethe, a fervent reader of Schiller, a professor among the French, and the representative of a country which at that time did not exist—talked with Goethe on equal terms, as though their conversation was a prelude to the future development of European history. Such, for me, is the significance of Mickiewicz's visit to Weimar.

That visit should give the keynote for Europe's new attitude towards Goethe, on this the morrow of the second world war.

(Translated from the Polish)



G O E T H E ' S    W E R T H E R

by THOMAS MANN



**T**he little volume, *Werther*, or to give it its full title, *The Sorrows of Young Werther, an Epistolary Novel*, provided the greatest, most widespread and most sensational success which Goethe had as author ever experienced. The Frankfurt barrister was fully twenty-four years old when he wrote this little work, outwardly not voluminous, and even youthfully limited as a picture of the world and of life, but unbelievably charged with explosive emotions. It was his second major work. It had been preceded only by *Götz von Berlichingen*, a drama in Shakespearian style, drawn from the knightly German past ; his force and warmth and the artistry with which he had instilled intimacy and life into historical events had already drawn the attention of the literary world to the young author. *Werther*, however, showed him in an entirely different light and was in complete contrast, both in character and in approach, to the earlier work. Its success owed something to the scandal it provoked. The unnerving and shattering sensitivity of the little book alarmed the guardians of public behaviour and was a source of shocked horror to the moralists, who found in these pages a glorification of and a stimulus to suicide ; but these were precisely the characteristics which gave rise to a storm of success that spread far beyond national frontiers and literally made the

world mad for the delights of dying. The novel aroused an intoxication, a fever, an ecstasy, which spread over the populated globe and had the effect of a spark falling into a powder keg, suddenly liberating a mass of dangerous forces.

It would not be easy to analyse the state of mind which at that time formed the subsoil of European civilization. Historically, it was the eve of that catastrophe, that terrible clearing of the atmosphere—the French Revolution; spiritually, the epoch on which Rousseau had stamped his sensitive, rebellious spirit. The disgust with civilization, the emancipation of emotions, the agitated yearning for a return to elemental nature, the struggle against the chains of a torpid culture, the revolt against conventions and bourgeois narrowness—all these united to bring about the opposition of the spirit to the limitations of the individual itself and to convert an enthusiastic and limitless vital urge into the form of a longing for death. Melancholy and disgust at the rhythmic sameness of life were the fashion. In Germany, the movement known as “Weltschmerz” was strengthened by the effects of a certain kind of “graveyard poetry” which at that time had made its appearance in English literature. Even Shakespeare contributed to this disposition. Hamlet and his monologues haunted the minds of all the young. Ossian and the

primitive, horror-filled, dark and heroic sensations which he communicated, reflected the passions of the younger generation.

It was as if the public of every country, secretly and unconsciously, had been waiting for this work of a still very ordinary young citizen of the free city of Frankfurt, a work which would liberate the concentrated yearning of a world in revolutionary mood—the word of deliverance. There is the story of a young Englishman who came to Weimar in later years and saw Goethe passing by; he fainted on the street, overcome; it had been too much for him to glimpse the author of *Werther* in person. Goethe recalls later, in a Venetian epigram, the world success of *Werther* :

Germany imitated me and France was pleased to read me.  
 England! you received in friendly fashion the unsettling guest.  
 But what does it avail me that even the Chinese  
 Paint, with anxious hand, Werther and Lotte on glass?

From the very beginning the pair entered the company of classical lovers of poetry and legend. Laura and Petrarch, Romeo and Juliet, Abelard and Heloise, Paolo and Francesca. Every youth aspired to become a lover like Werther, every maiden to know a love such as his. An entire generation of young people recognized their own spiritual philosophy reflected in that of Werther. It was a demonstration of

enthusiasm to go about in the costume ascribed in the novel to the doomed youth—the blue cutaway coat with yellow waistcoat and trousers. The imitation, the melancholy feeling of oneness with the young hero went to the extreme limit: there were suicides which derived clearly and explicitly from Werther's example, and which, therefore, said the moralists, the author of the shattering novel had on his conscience. These misguided youths, however, forgot that whereas the author of *Werther* had described with great artistry the growth of a suicidal decision in a young breast, he himself had certainly not committed suicide, but had on the contrary overcome his fatal inclinations through his creative efforts and had freed himself of those inclinations by his writing. Goethe speaks in his memoirs of this almost grotesque difference between the healing effects which this novel had on his own life and the external reaction which it brought about. He himself had passed through all that was troubling and unnerving his generation. The thought of self-destruction was no stranger to him, it had even at times almost reached the point of resolution. He describes in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* how, in the period just preceding *Werther*, every night before extinguishing the light, he had tried to see whether he could not force the sharp point of a dagger an inch or two into his breast.

Finally, since he did not succeed, he laughed at himself and decided to live. He felt, nevertheless, that he could not do so without carrying out an artistic exercise in which all that he had thought or felt on this subject should be expressed. This acknowledgement, this "general confession", as Goethe called it, was *Werther*. When the book was completed, he felt free and entitled to a new life. But whereas he had unburdened and explained himself by transforming reality into poetry, other young people were confused thereby, and believed that poetry must be transformed into reality, that they must re-enact the novel and shoot themselves in any event. And so that which had been so salutary for him was denounced as being in the highest degree pernicious.

To the end of his life Goethe was proud of this youthful work, which he regarded, together with *Faust*, as his best. "The man who wrote *Werther* at the age of twenty-four", he said as an old man, "is certainly no good-for-nothing." One of the most significant moments of his life, his encounter with Napoleon at Erfurt, is connected with this event. The Emperor had read the little book no less than seven times; it had even accompanied him on his Egyptian campaign, and at that famous audience he subjected the poet to a critical examination concerning it. The

great and versatile genius had never disowned the enigmatic youthful figure ; its shadow had always fraternally accompanied him, and the old man of seventy-five, who for the sake of young Ulrica had once more to endure the delicious and terrifying perturbations of love, in a poem entitled "To Werther", describes his return in ghostly terms.

The experience which is the basis of *Werther*, the idyllic, painful episode of Goethe's love for Lotte Buff, the lovely daughter of the bailiff of Wetzlar on the Lahn, became as famous as the novel itself, and justly so, since large parts of the book correspond exactly to the real events and are a true and unaltered copy of them. Goethe came in 1772, at the age of twenty-three, to the enchantingly situated Rhenish country town, at the instigation of his father, who wanted the young Doctor of Laws to practise in the Federal court of justice there. His own inclination was rather toward reading the classics, writing and living, and he followed it ; the court of justice rarely caught sight of him. The streets of Wetzlar were narrow and dirty, but the surrounding countryside was charming, it was May-time, everything was in bloom, and the poetic Rambler soon discovered his favourite corners—the fountains, streams and romantic vantage-points of the Lahn valley where he read his Homer, his Pindar, had discussions with friends, sketched and



meditated. At a country dance of young folk he met the nineteen-year-old Lotte, who lived with her widowed father and her many brothers and sisters in the so-called "Deutschordenshaus". She was neat, blonde, blue-eyed and had a serene, responsible character; without higher education she was, in a healthy way, sensitive, playful, yet at the same time serious, for since her mother's death she had assumed the rôle of mother to a swarm of younger brothers and sisters, and had taken charge of the household for her father. Goethe first saw her when he called for her at her home dressed ready for the ball, in a white frock with pink bows, slicing bread for the supper of the children who surrounded her—a scene which is exactly described in *Werther* and has frequently been illustrated. He spent the evening with her, paid her a visit next day, and was completely in love before he knew that Lotte was engaged. This he soon learnt. The bridegroom-elect was a secretary of legation named Kestner, from Hanover, an excellent average person who loved Lotte deeply and whose love she confidently returned. Theirs was clearly no great passion, but rather a calm though tender reciprocal affection based on a common future, rational aims, and the desire to establish a family. They were only waiting until Kestner's situation should permit them to marry.

Goethe was admitted to this relationship as a third member, an admired and heartily welcomed friend and companion—the poet, the man of genius, the true-hearted and upstanding sentimental vagabond who was at the same time faithless, and, in a worldly sense, unreliable, having only recently betrayed and abandoned Frederike Brion simply because he shrank from marriage ties. He was the young Daemon, who says of himself in *Faust*: “Am I not the fugitive, the homeless, the monster without aim or rest?”—an appealing monster, handsome, gifted, full of high spirits and life, of fire and sentiment, exuberant and melancholy; in short, odd in a pleasant way. The young couple, Kestner as well as Lotte, were very fond of him, the children in the house especially loved him dearly, and the three of them spent a strange, happy and dangerous summer—and often they were only two, since Kestner, conscientious and busy, could but seldom join them, and while he was dancing attendance on his minister, Goethe, with nothing to do, hung around Lotte, the *fiancée*.

He helped her about the house, in the kitchen garden, with the flowers, picking fruit and gathering beans with her. He had all the advantages over the much-occupied bridegroom-to-be: that of a free and uncomplicated access to her presence, to say nothing of those of his talented youthful personality—with

which the worthy Kestner could not possibly compete. Lotte certainly loved him, but being a clever, virtuous girl who knew what she wanted, she managed to control and hold within bounds her feelings for him as well as his own will-o'-the-wisp passion, which he did not always conceal. At least she did so most of the time. Once, while they were gathering raspberries, he allowed himself to be carried away to the point of kissing her. She was very angry about it and did not hesitate to tell her fiancé. Was it an admission or a confession? In any case they decided to hold him closer in check, to treat him more coldly, which was also rendered advisable by the fact that the strange relationship was already inspiring a certain amount of public gossip. It put Kestner slightly out of humour; he was incapable of great anger. Lotte took the transgressor to task and declared once and for all that he could expect nothing beyond good comradeship from her. Had he not realized that all along—he, who now stood so sadly before her? Had he ever thought he could separate her from her good Hans Christian and take her for himself, as so many people already seemed to think? Certainly not, first of all because of her loyalty and sense of propriety—and not only because of these, but because his love so completely locked the permanency and practical purposefulness of Kestner's :

Goethe's love was vague sentiment, aimless passion, a poem in process of creation.

The engaged couple were full of sympathy for the embarrassment, the unreasonable suffering, of their likable friend. They gave him singular gifts to comfort him: a silhouette of Lotte, one of the pink bows which she had worn on her frock the day he first met her. Of course these gifts were not merely from Lotte, they came as well from Kestner the prospective bridegroom, and they make us feel as if we were watching a prince accepting alms from very simple and worthy folk.

In the autumn Goethe secretly and suddenly took his departure. The three-cornered idyll had lasted for four months. The poet's impressions, combining the most painful frankness of sentiment with the exigencies of artistic creation, were completed in Frankfurt, whither he betook himself, drawn by his relationship with another woman who filled his life to a remarkable degree immediately following his separation from Lotte. This was Maximiliane La Roche of Ehrenbreitstein, an uncommonly beautiful black-eyed girl who had only just married a rich widower in Frankfurt, a merchant named Peter Brentano, with whom she felt thoroughly unhappy, living in his dark house that smelt of oil and cheese. Goethe often sat with her, played silly games with





her five step-children, as he had done with Lotte's brothers and sisters—for he was a veritable Pied Piper to whom children became immediately attached—accompanied Maxie's piano playing on his 'cello and—that is probably not all. For Brentano strode angrily in one day, there was an outburst, which developed, as Goethe himself puts it, “into horrifying moments”, and the friendship came to an end. But the black eyes of Lotte in the Werther novel, for hers were in reality blue, were those of Frau Brentano.

The association with her helped materially to complete the story of the novel. Even more so did a fatal incident which took place just at this time in the circle of the poet's acquaintances. A man named Jerusalem, a secretary of legation from Brunswick, with a gifted, melancholy nature that suffered from life, entangled in a hopeless love for the wife of another man and deeply embittered as well by social setbacks, had shot himself through the head. The incident made a sensation and its being, on the human side, a matter of deep concern for Goethe, did not alter the fact that its occurrence just at that time was extremely opportune: it provided the still nebulous Wetzlar tale with an objective situation; there began a process of self-identification with Jerusalem, who had committed an act long familiar to the poet's own thoughts. It supplied an ideal

figure to assume all the world-weariness and grief of genius, all the generosity and the misery, all the weakness, longings, passions of the time and of his own heart, and the only part of the project remaining still uncertain was its form.

It was originally intended as a drama, but this would not take shape. In its place came another form which united dramatic, lyric and narrative elements: that of an epistolary novel, for which Richardson and Rousseau had established a new tradition. The young author shut himself away from all society and dashed off *Werther's Sorrows* in a scant four weeks—the performance would have been even more astonishing had he not had at his side a pile of letters and notes from a journal which he himself had written in the Wetzlar days and which he used for the novel practically as they stood, not even changing the dates.

It is a masterpiece in which devastating feeling and precocious artistic understanding achieve an almost unique combination. Youth and genius are its subject and out of youth and genius it was created.\*

\* This article appeared previously in: *Corona, Studies in Philology in celebration of the eightieth birthday of Samuel Singer . . .* edited by Anna Schinkskaver and Wolfgang Paulsen, Duke University, 1941.

(Translated from the German)



M E S S A G E  
F R O M   E A R T H

by GABRIELA MISTRAL

*P*adre Goethe que estas sobre los cielos  
entre los Tronos y Dominaciones  
y duermes y vigilas con los ojos  
por la cascada de tu luz rasgados :  
si te liberta el abrazo del Padre,  
rompe la Ley y el cerco del Arcángel,  
y aunque te den como piedra de escandalo  
abandona los coros de tu gozo  
bajando en ventisquero derretido  
o albatros libre que llega devuelto.

*Parece que tu cruza, el Memorioso,  
la vieja red de todas nuestras rutas  
y que te acudan nombres sumergidos  
para envolverte en su malla de fuego :  
Tierra, Deméter, y Gea y Prakriti.  
Tal vez tú nos recuerdes como a fábula  
y, con el llanto de los trascordados,  
llores recuperando an niño tierno  
que mamo leches, chupó miel silvestre,  
quebró conchas y aprendió metales.*

*Tu nos has visto en hora de sol lacio  
y el Orión y la Andrómeda disueltos  
acurrucarnos bajo de tu cedro,  
parecidos a renos atrapados  
o a bisontes cogidos del espanto.*

Father Goethe who are above the heavens  
Among the Dominations and the Thrones  
and sleep and watch with eyes astare  
sluices of your downpouring light :  
if you may leave the fond arm of the Father,  
break the Law and the Archangel's ring,  
and, though the finger of opprobrium points,  
leave the choirs of your joy and come,  
descending like a glacier in the warm season  
or the wild albatross winging to its shore.

It seems that in your timelessness is spread  
the immemorial net of all our ways  
and that you are beset with names long gone  
wrapping you round as in a mail of fire :  
Earth, Demeter, Gea and Pakriti.  
Of us you are mindful perhaps as of a fable  
and, with the sorrow of the unremembered,  
will mourn when you find again the tender child  
who drank of the breast and relished the wild honey  
and broke the shells and pored upon the ores.

You saw us, when the sum was languishing  
and Orion with Andromeda dissolved,  
crouch in the shadow of your cedar-tree,  
like reindeer caught in traps or bisons  
stricken with fear.

*Somos, como en tu burla visionaria,  
la gente de la boca retorcida  
por lengua bífida, la casta ebria  
del «si» y el «no», la unidad y el divorcio,  
aun con el Fraudulento mascullando  
miembros tiznados de palabras tuyas.*

*Todavía vivimos en la gruta  
de la luz verde seddaga de dolo,  
donde la Larva procrea sin sangre  
y funden en Madrépora los pólipos.  
Y hay todavía en grasas de murciélago  
y en plumones morosos de lucezas,  
una noche que quiere eternizarse  
para mascar su betún de tiniebla.*

*Procura distinguir tu prole lívida  
medio Cordelia loca y medio Euménide :  
todo hallarás igual en esta gruta  
nunca lavada de salmuera acérrima.  
Y vas a hallar, Demiurgo, cuando marches,  
bajo cubo de piedra, la bujeta  
donde unos prueban mostaza de infierno  
en bizca, operación de medianoche.*

*Pero será por gracia de este día  
que en el percal de los aires se hace*

G            O            E            T            H            E

We are, as in your visionary jest,  
the people with twisted mouth and cloven tongue,  
the race inebriate with yes and no,  
with oneness and divorce,  
and muttering with the Falsifier still  
darkly a broken smatter of your words.

We are still living in the cave  
of green light shot with guile,  
where the larva bloodless breeds  
and polyps merge in Madrepore.  
And bat-grease and owls' sullen down  
shed still a night that fain would be eternal  
and feed for ever on its black bitumen.

Try and discern your livid progeny  
half mad Cordelia, half Eumenide :  
you will find only sameness in this cave  
never scoured by the biting brine.  
And you will discover, Demiurge, as you go,  
the casket underneath a block of stone,  
whither in a peering midnight deed men come  
to taste the mustard of the pit of hell.

Yet it will even be by this day's grace  
that in the cambric of the skies the wind

*paro de viento, quiebro de marea.  
Como que quieres permear la Tierra,  
sajada en res, con tu río de vida,  
que desalteras al calenturiento  
y echas señales al apercibido.  
Y vuela el aire un guiño de respuesta  
un si-es no-es de albricias, un vilano,  
y no hay en lo que llega a nuestra carne  
tacto ni sacudida que conturben  
sino un siseo de labio amoroso  
más delgado que silbo : apenas habla.*

G O E T H E

is lulled, and hushed the wave.

What time you seek to permeate the earth,  
stricken like a beast, with your river of life,  
and slake the fevered's thirst  
and signal to the chosen.

And in the air a stir of answer trembles,  
a quiver of goods news, a thistle-down,  
and never a hint in what assails our flesh  
of roughness or of hurt,  
nought but a whispering of loving lips,  
less than a hiss : scarce a breath.





G O E T H E  
A N D T H E C R E A T I V E  
F A C T O R S I N  
C O N T E M P O R A R Y  
C U L T U R E

by FILMER STUART NORTHROP



More than any other modern creative thinker, Goethe foresaw two major creative movements of contemporary culture. They are: the pursuit of relational, organic factors as well as atomic, analytic elements in science; and the harmonious synthesis of aesthetic and scientific knowledge. Only in one respect did Goethe fail to envisage the novel scientific and philosophical conception of man, nature and culture which is gradually coming to articulation in our time. Contemporary events in Asia cannot be understood unless it is realized that the Orientals are insisting upon placing the political control of their destiny in their own hands in order, among other things, to apply the scientific knowledge of the West to their natural resources to lift the economic well-being of their people generally. These Western scientific instrumentalities derive from the experimentally verified theory of modern mathematical physics. Consequently the unique cultural phenomenon of our time—the rise of Asia—cannot be understood without recognizing the key rôle of mathematical natural science in world culture.

But mathematical physics was the one thing which Goethe never understood. As Ernst Cassirer has pointed out, "Goethe's theory of nature was one continued attack on Newton and Newtonian physics. During the course of his life, this attack grew sharper

and sharper, and it finally led to a tragic climax. Everywhere—among philosophers, physicists, biologists—he looked for allies in this contest, but he was able to convince scarcely anyone. Here he stood alone and this isolation filled him with a growing bitterness.”\* In this respect, Goethe no more fits our contemporary world than he harmonized with his own.

Nevertheless there are two respects in which contemporary developments in mathematical physics and the philosophy of nature give expression to Goethe’s theory of nature as well as to Newton’s. These two respects have to do with the emphasis upon relational as well as atomistic factors in contemporary mathematical physics and with the relation between the inductively given aesthetic component and the mathematically designated theoretic component in the contemporary scientist’s knowledge of nature.

The entire topic may best be approached by way of Goethe’s relation to Kant and Kant’s analysis of Newton’s physics. An excellent account of the relation between these three men appears in Ernst Cassirer’s *Rousseau—Kant—Goethe*. In this study, Cassirer writes, “Kant demanded that mathematics should enter into every part of the theory of nature,

\* Ernst Cassirer, *Rousseau—Kant—Goethe*, Princeton University Press, 1945, p. 62.

Goethe energetically rejected any such notion. "Physics must be divorced from mathematics", he said.\*

But if contemporary thought in mathematical physics and the philosophy of nature is on Kant's side against Goethe upon this point, it is none the less on Goethe's side against Kant upon another, perhaps even more important, point. Kant, it will be recalled, introduced a sharp gulf between the philosophy of the arts and the humanities and the philosophy of nature—a gulf which all of Kant's efforts in his *Critique of Judgment* never removed. Goethe, on the other hand, insisted that human values derive from and have their roots in nature. In other words, Goethe was a naturalist in his theory of value. Thus upon this crucial point Goethe foresaw a major development in the science and philosophy of our own time. In fact it was precisely Goethe's insistence upon rooting the source of the arts and of all human values in nature which led him to a concept of nature so alien to that of the Newtonian mathematical physicists.

Goethe's approach to the essential connexion between art and nature is a most obvious one. The arts, whatever else they may be doing, are always working with immediately experienced materials. The painter

\* Ibid.

puts immediately sensed colours before us. The musician presents immediately heard sounds in their immediately apprehended sequence. The poet, to be sure, gives us words, but words which, if they are effective as poetry, conjure up in our imagination the same vivid images and sensations which the painter achieves by means of his pigments on canvas and the musician creates by means of the sounds from his instruments.

But Goethe saw also that nature, as immediately sensed, presents to us precisely the same kind of materials. When we look at nature we see it ablaze with sensuous qualities like those which the painter puts upon his canvas. We hear the brook babbling when we walk beside it in the woods in the same way in which the poet conjures up the babble for us in our imagination by the lines of his poem. Thus Goethe saw the very obvious error in Kant's theory of value—the error of supposing that human values are alien to nature as directly observed and hence scientifically known. Only a person who is deaf, dumb and blind could escape the obvious fact that nature itself presents to our senses at every moment, perhaps in a different order to be sure, the same ineffable, sensuous materials and images with the humanist as artist concerns himself.

What Goethe saw was that it is because the tradi-

tional mathematical physicist's conception of nature, upon which Kant reared his philosophy of nature, ignored this aesthetically immediate component of nature, that it failed to account for aesthetic and other human values and thereby drove Kant to an autonomous ethics and to a philosophy of the humanities having little or nothing to do with one's scientific knowledge of nature. Goethe's only error was in concluding, by a *non sequitor*, that, because immediately sensed nature is scientifically and philosophically evident and real, therefore, the theoretic component of nature designated by the experimentally verified theory of the mathematical physicists is not also real, and is consequently to be attacked and condemned.

This problem is cleared up when one realizes that in man's scientific approach to nature his scientific inquiries pass through two stages. One, the inductive stage in which nature is presented and described as in Goethe's vivid, emotional, qualitative and intuitive morphological terms; the other, which comes after the inductive natural history stage, in which the scientist passes to mathematical deductively formulated theory, the primitive entities and relations of which are not directly observable. Both types of scientific knowledge and stages of scientific method contribute to the final total of one's scientific and philosophical

theory of nature.\* The natural history approach gives nature or any natural object in Goethe an aspect of felt qualitative aesthetic immediacy, in which only the form or morphology of the object in its aesthetic unity is evident, and the analytic parts of the whole are present to awareness only potentially and vaguely—often even unnoticed. The stage of deductively formulated theory gives nature in Newton and Kant's aspect as theoretically designated, with the analytic components and relations in the centre of thought and the morphological unity of the whole expressed, to be sure, by the totality of propositions of the deductive theory but—because of the finiteness of the human mind—present to thought piece by piece rather than as a whole. It is not an accident that Goethe's approach to nature was of the inductive, sensuous natural history type and that the scientific concept of morphology arose with him.

Kant's scientific conception of nature brushed this natural history aesthetic component of nature aside as mere appearance, making the theoretically known mathematical metric of the forms of sensibility and the theoretically designated categories of the understanding, substance, causality, etc., the significant

\* For a further detailed development of this point see my *Logic of the Sciences and the Humanities*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1947.



philosophical content of the scientist's knowledge of nature. That this *is* philosophically important Kant saw quite correctly. That the immediately sensed aesthetic component of nature is also valid scientific and philosophical knowledge, and as important for ethics and art as it is for natural history biology, it was the genius of Goethe to see and to emphasize.

The weakness of both Kant and Goethe is that each saw the factor in scientific knowledge and nature which he himself emphasized as the only significant one. Thus Kant, notwithstanding his unsuccessful attempt to retrieve the situation in his *Critique of Judgment*, tended to regard Goethe's felt qualitative aesthetic immediacy as mere superficial appearance and Goethe found it necessary to attack the theoretic component of nature of the mathematical physicists with a fury which eventually embittered his spirit.

One of the most important results of the philosophy of natural science of our own day is its demonstration that the sensuously and aesthetically immediate natural history knowledge of nature which Goethe emphasized, and the theoretically designated, experimentally verified, mathematical knowledge of nature which Newton and Kant emphasized, are both equally ultimate, irreducible and real.

The cause of the supposed opposition, assumed in common by both Kant and Goethe, between these

two factors is to be found in the second of two assumptions, underlying traditional modern thought, made by Galilei and Newton in their statement of the conception of nature of modern mathematical physics. These assumptions are: (1) sensuously immediate qualitative data in sensed space and time must be distinguished from mass particles in theoretically designated public, mathematical space and time. (2) the former is related to the latter by way of the scientist as observer, as appearance to reality.\* It is to be noted that it is the second of these two assumptions made by Galilei and Newton which leads to Kant's conception of Goethe's aesthetically immediate component of nature as mere appearance, and hence as a superficial type of knowledge so far as science is concerned and a selfish basis for conduct so far as moral philosophy is concerned.

More recent studies of the relation between theoretically designated factors and sensuously immediate, inductively given, natural history factors in scientific knowledge have shown, however, that the aesthetic component of nature of Goethe's natural history inductive science is related to the theoretic component of nature of experimentally verified modern

\* See Newton's *Principia*, Cajori Edition, University of California Press, 1934, p. 6, and E. A. Burt's *Metaphysical Foundations of Physics*, Harcourt Brace & Co., 1925, pp. 73—80 and 228—237.

mathematical physics, not as appearance and reality, but as two equally basic components of a single thing. Put in more technical terms, it has been found that æsthetically immediate factors are related to theoretically designated factors in scientific knowledge not by the three-termed relation of appearance but by the two-termed relation which may be appropriately called "epistemic correlation".\* The substitution of the latter relation for the former has the consequence of making æsthetic immediacy as ultimate a component of scientific and philosophical knowledge as is the theoretically and mathematically designated component of nature. Thus Goethe's natural history, æsthetically immediate component of nature, which, as he saw, provides a basis in nature for art and human values and for morphological biology, combines with Newton and Kant's and the contemporary mathematical physicist's mathematical concept of nature, without conflict. Goethe can keep his remarkable insight without becoming embittered.

It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that art and the humanities find in nature only this

\* For a further development of this fact and its significance for the humanities and the harmonious unification of the differing values of the world's cultures, see Chapter XII of my *Meeting of East and West*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1946; also H. Margenau, "Methodology of Modern Physics" in *Philosophy of Science*, Vol. II, pp. 48—72 and 164—187.

sensuously immediate æsthetic component of nature designated by Goethe's qualitative natural history morphological science and by the intuitive artist. The art of the Western world which restricts itself to the inductive, sensuous qualities given in the natural history stage of scientific inquiry which Goethe emphasized is not the art of Goethe's poetry or Goethe's time, but instead the art of the French impressionists and America's Georgia O'Keeffe. Goethe's art falls within the camp of the classical artists rather than of the more recent modernists and impressionists. Only the latter come near giving us nature as immediately apprehended without any element of theoretically known mathematical proportion added. Goethe's morphology and his art referred to the form of external, public objects, geometrically, and hence mathematically, proportioned. Thus for all his objection to Newton's mathematical concept of nature, Goethe's own art often, at least, had the mathematical concept within it.

Bishop Berkeley makes it inescapably clear that the external object conceived as an entity with a persisting three-dimensional proportion the same for all observers, notwithstanding their differing sensuous images of it, if it exists at all, is known by thought and is not a purely empirical datum within felt qualitative æsthetic immediacy. It is by restricting itself

to the qualitative datum and by letting go of the postulated public external object with its constant geometrical proportion that impressionistic art arises and abstractionism is made possible. Furthermore, it is only by bringing the mathematical concept, with its ratios and proportions, into the fuzzy images and impressions of æsthetic immediacy, and by foreshortening and sharpening the images according to the laws of geometrical optics of mathematical physics that the classical art of the West, of which Goethe's own art is a specific instance, comes into being. Thus Goethe's natural history morphological science with its reference to plants and animals conceived as three-dimensional external objects, and his own poetry give the lie to his theory that the mathematical physicist's science is an evil so far as the artist and the humanist is concerned. Goethe's own science of morphology and his own art embodied the mathematical factor as well as the æsthetically immediate factor. Thus, while Goethe's theory of both art and science was one-sided and attendantly partial, his actual art was an illustration of the richer and more complete understanding of both art and science in our own time.

But it is merely an illustration. This is the case because his actual art took its theoretically designated factor from the rather simple-minded geometrical

mathematics of Euclid and applied it to common sense objects, thereby restricting itself and losing the generality and the greater deductive fertility and wider range of applicability of a morphology identified with the relatedness of nature of contemporary experimentally verified mathematical physics.

Contemporary art, like contemporary thought, is with Goethe in the insistence upon finding inspiration for the arts, the humanities and human values generally in nature—and in a nature in which sensuously immediate and formal or morphological factors are combined. But it is moving away from the conception of the morphological in terms of the common sense objects to which Goethe's art and Goethe's science for the most part restricted themselves. This movement away has taken two directions. The first is a withdrawal from the external common sense object of classical art to the pure datum of the immediately apprehended æsthetic continuum which induction, unsupplemented with theory, gives one. This movement shows itself in impressionism in painting, music and literature, and in the subsequent abstractionism which the release of images from common sense objects made possible.

The second movement away from Goethe's common sense, intuitive morphology is in the direction of scientific objects and relatedness with more

subtlety, greater generality and an attendantly greater range of applicability. This movement shows itself in the physical chemistry of Willard Gibbs, the relativistic electromagnetics and mechanics of Einstein, and the quantum mechanics of Planck, Heisenberg, Schroedinger and Dirac. Gibbs' physical chemistry, in which the second law of thermodynamics is basic, reveals nature as the irreversible process in time which Goethe's genetic morphology envisaged. Einstein's relativity theory replaced Newton's analytic particle physics with field physics, thereby revealing relatedness or form to be the scientifically basic thing which Goethe's emphasis upon morphology sought to establish. Quantum mechanics with its *exclusion principle* of Pauli establishes the conclusion that even though atomicity and particle physics may be required, the atomic parts have formal or morphological restrictions placed by nature upon what they can do. Thus, although modern science in the last one hundred and fifty years has moved away from Goethe's natural history common sense morphology, this movement in all three of its major parts has been toward Goethe's emphasis upon the genetically morphological as scientifically significant and basic.

Two of the most spectacular and refreshingly creative achievements of our time are in art on the one hand and in mathematical physics on the other. It is

by uniting the products of these two creations of the contemporary human spirit—the existential æsthetic component of the art of impressionism or the art of a Georgia O’Keeffe and the formal theoretic component designated by the mathematical physicists—that Goethe’s vision of human values rooted in a science of nature at once both qualitatively vivid and essentially morphological is being achieved. In this achievement a scientific basis is being laid for a truly universal ideology for our world which may bring into harmony those Oriental and Latin cultures rooted in the intuitive values of æsthetic immediacy and those Western cultures whose values stem from the more abstract theoretically known *logos* of a logically or mathematically formulated doctrine. More than any other thinker of the traditional modern world, Goethe foresaw, often vaguely and in a restricted form to be sure, the riches of contemporary creative artistic, scientific and philosophical thought in which a purer intuition of existential æsthetic immediacy and a more universal and fertile conception of the formal or the morphological are being combined.



G O E T H E

by SIR SARVEPALLI RADHAKHRISHNAN



The custom of celebrating the hundredth or the two hundredth anniversary of the birth of an outstanding literary figure offers an opportunity for his admirers to exalt his genius and set forth his principal ideas in the contemporary context. The year 1949 is the bicentennial of the birth of Goethe, who ranks with Dante and Shakespeare as a supreme force in European letters ; and many Goethe festivals are planned in different parts of the world.

Never was there a time when it seemed more necessary that Goethe's spirit should be kept alive among us than now when international relations between the leading powers of the world are severely strained and when ideological fanaticisms are darkening all wise counsel and extinguishing human sympathies. It will be presumptuous to refer to Goethe's spirit and ideals in all their fulness in a few pages but we may turn to one or two aspects which have a particular bearing on the aims and work of Unesco.

### *World Literature*

The main purpose of Unesco is the development of world community. Our objective is the unity of mankind. Nations to-day are not dealing with one another as honest neighbours but are scheming against one another as secret enemies. If we are to

break down these hatreds and prejudices, we must turn to science and letters, music and painting. We may denounce Hitler and Goering, Bismarck and Moltke, but not Goethe and Kant, Beethoven and Lessing, for they are universal spirits and not narrow patriots.

The dream of one world occupied Goethe's thoughts, particularly during the closing years of his life. He cherished it with intense devotion and was often blamed by some of his narrow-minded countrymen for it. Complaint was made that Goethe kept aloof from the patriots in Germany's Wars of Liberation against Napoleon. The Nazis who were able to use Schiller and Nietzsche for the purposes of their propaganda did not find it convenient to use Goethe's writings. Goethe was a universal man with wide human sympathies and very little of the limiting national sentiment. He felt at home wherever he found beauty and truth; wherever he could make himself helpful, there was his country. Genuine excellency, wherever it may arise, belongs to all mankind.

Unesco believes that if nations like individuals know each other, they will become friendly and helpful to each other. We should promote the spread of liberal sentiment and mutual love and esteem among the peoples of the world by a study of the great

classics which belong to world literature. "Many people" Goethe says, "have been talking of a world literature for some time, and not without some reason, for all nations after having been shaken together by the most dreadful wars, and then being left again each to itself, could not but see that they had observed and absorbed many strange things, and had felt here and there certain intellectual wants, heretofore unknown to them. Hence arose a sense of neighbourly relations, and while formerly they lived secluded people now felt in their mind a growing desire to be received into the more or less free intellectual commerce of the whole world" (Goethe's Works, XLVI, p. 233). Goethe aimed at a kind of intellectual free trade. We owe much of what we are and we have to the contributions made by the great thinkers and poets of all races. Goethe talking to Johann Peter Eckermann, on January 31st, 1827, said: "I am more and more convinced that poetry is the universal possession of mankind revealing itself everywhere and at all times in hundreds and hundreds of men. One makes it a little better than another, and swims on the surface a little longer than another—that is all . . . But really we Germans are very likely to fall too easily into this pedantic conceit when we do not look beyond the narrow circle which surrounds us. I therefore like to look about me in

foreign nations and advise every one to do the same. National literature is now rather an unmeaning term ; the epoch of world literature is at hand, and every one must strive to hasten its approach." Goethe stressed the responsibilities of the writer, that he belongs not to one country alone but to the world at large, that he belongs not to the present only, but to the past and to the future. The highest intellectual work should be done in this all-embracing spirit and under the sense of this universal responsibility. The greatest men are those who feel the spirit of the words of Terence : "I count nothing strange to me that is human."

### *Theistic Humanism*

In Goethe's time, philosophy in its true sense of a passionate love of wisdom and of truth was almost forgotten and religion ceased to be a living faith and was reduced to an intellectual adornment. Goethe reckoned with the new forces of the time and stood out for a humanist view of life. He found in Spinoza the philosopher who responded to his needs. As a poet he was interested in the visible world and its inhabitants and not in philosophic abstractions. There can be no true poetry without a delight in the physical world. He rejected the false materialism which was then fashionable and found the supreme

good of life in an intense identification with nature, its beauty, its infinite variety and its reflection of a meaning beyond. Spinoza taught him to see in nature the living garment of God. Emerson wrote of him that he "had said the best things about nature that ever were said. The old Eternal Genius who built the world has confided himself more to this man than to any other (*Representative Men*).

If we look upon nature as something different from ourselves, alien and therefore hostile, we feel that we are victims of necessity and therefore unfree. But if nature is experienced as the vibrations of the same spirit that works within ourselves then we experience real freedom. The mechanistic conception of human character prevails today to a larger extent than ever before. Man is considered to be merely the result of heredity and environment. The description of his behaviour has only the interest which attaches to the problems of Physics. Goethe finds in human beings a value far higher than that which they derive from objective nature. He saw through the fallacies of radical determinism and absolute freedom and pointed a way beyond these two extremes. "Our life like the great whole in which we are contained is made up in some incomprehensible manner of both freedom and necessity."

Goethe had great faith in the immanence of the Supreme. "If the eye were not sunny it could not glimpse the sun. If God's own strength did not lie in us, how could the Divine delight us?" asked Goethe. Excepting Shakespeare, there was no other European writer who knew as well as Goethe the heights and depths of life. No other was so much in love with life—"However life be it is good". Goethe was unconventional in his life, especially in his relations with women. He had a virile, pagan, passionate nature which did not help him to live like a puritan Sunday school teacher. Emerson put it mildly when he said that Goethe "was not afraid to live". As a widower of eighty he fell madly in love with a girl who could have been his grand-daughter and was deeply disturbed when she refused to marry him.

If Goethe was a hedonist, he was so only in a noble sense. He loved the beauty in life. No man is truly emancipated if he is not made free to enjoy the beauty in life.

Goethe was not insensible to the sufferings of the oppressed and the downtrodden. While he abhorred the brutalities which accompanied the French Revolution, he was quite aware of its significance. He wrote with sympathy and understanding of the achievements of George Washington and Benjamin Franklin.



*Activism*

In one of his letters to Carlyle, Goethe writes: "We then thought of nothing but striving, no one thought of asking for rewards, but was only anxious to deserve them." Like the ancient Buddhists, he laid stress on a life of strenuous endeavour. His activism was as far removed from the soulless drive of the robot as from the self-negation of pure contemplatives.

From the active nature of the human being, Goethe argues to the reality of his future after death. He wrote to Eckermann: "If I remain ceaselessly active to the end of my days, Nature is under an obligation to allot me another form of existence, when the present one is no longer capable of containing my spirit. I do not doubt the continuance of our existence. May it then be that He who is eternally living will not refuse us new forms of activity analogous to those in which we have been tested?"

Goethe had a sense of mission in life. He felt himself to be a symbol. He wrote to Frau von Stein: "God uses me as he did his saints of old and I do not know how it comes to me. You know how symbolic my life is." The values for which he stood ought to be valid for any form of society.

# G O E T H E

To us, in Unesco, his message is significant. Internationalism must become a vital force that moves the whole world. It is a force now committed to all those who can use their intellectual and spiritual resources. Those who have literary and artistic power should protest against the uncleanness of the time and build a world based on truth, beauty and goodness.

Let us not lose hope by the slowness of progress. Prejudices piled up in the course of centuries cannot be removed in a day. With the world perspective of Goethe, let us work in silence and in hope for “peace on earth and good will towards men”, towards *all* men.

N O T E S   O N   G O E T H E

by ALFONSO REYES



### *His Political Ideas*

Suffice it to say, without reducing him to points of view incompatible with his time or his life, that in every page and fragment where one runs across the theme, Goethe shows respect for the people. On the other hand, he scorns charlatans and abominates agitators. He recognizes the rights of the French Third Estate, and longs for relief for the oppressed classes. In his aversion to violence and to false apostles, he would prefer revolution to begin from above in order to avoid excesses and bloodshed. Personally, he always favoured renunciation rather than cruelty. He would never allow himself to be classified as a conservative, for the simple reason that it seemed to him that most things were capable of improvement. In his view, institutions do not exist of themselves. The men of whom they are composed may or may not be able to further the general well-being. But institutions can be regulated in such a fashion that may facilitate the good efforts of the government and restrain the expression of its bad inclinations. Everything in Goethe's life and in his work shows the most lively sympathy with the artisan and the labourer, whom he considers as definitely the most likeable part of humanity, comparing them to bees and birds. In his work as minister, his chief

concern, his real political achievement consisted in improving the conditions of the peasants and small-holders. The truth is that he considered them as being still minors, which was indeed the case. And they are so yet, in the eyes of the legislators, who handle them with the foresight and care of actual tutelage of guardianship. The political and economic changes which the nineteenth century brought forth were not unwelcome to Goethe. They lead him to temper his individualism and organizes it so to speak into a work society where there can be neither idlers nor dilettantes. In *Wilhelm Meister*, he depicts a social utopia which has many traits in common with that of Saint-Simon. His love of work is what draws him in the right direction, and makes him ours.

His personal aristocraticism compatible with the bourgeois conception of life, and based on it, may be defined thus: let all be done for the people, but not by the people. It is a turn of phrase, a question of grammar, a slightly disingenuous grammar. Goethe's attitude towards the French Revolution presents at first glance a contradiction. It is a contradiction easy to resolve: he is with the Revolution in principle, but he would have it realized without revolution. This is why he approves the aspirations of the people, but not the actions of their leaders. The revolutionary idea in its essence, the new spirit of the age,

will be, in his view legitimately incorporated by Napoleon. Against Napoleon it would not be possible to fight in the name of any nationalism which had no programme to offer except that of its own endorsement. This is a position very similar to that which many are still adopting today in the face of the new spirit of our own time. To Goethe as a biologist all loss of life is disastrous, and he would close his eyes before the death of those most dear to him in order not to bear in his memory the odious spectacle of disintegration. As a botanist he arrived at the conviction that a new formation wasted uselessly more energy than a transformation. If only revolutions could be realized without the sacrifice of what had already been achieved! Revolutions, he declares, benefit the man who receives their finished work, but harm him who makes them. In his desire for completeness, he would wish that no fragment of humanity, no virtue, no asset be sacrificed.

Moreover, Goethe's attitude toward the doctrines of Saint-Simon must be very carefully understood. Among us there are men who, without realizing it themselves, are duped by the first stages of the realization of new tendencies in the organization of Society and of the State. If, for example, one mentions Communism or Marxism to them, they angrily reject any affiliation with such systems, which they judge

inseparable from the deeds that have accompanied the Soviet Revolution or from its subsequent international conduct. Something similar happens with Goethe and Saint-Simon's philosophy, which in its actual manifestations, seems to him absurd and even grotesque, yet which is justified by the aspirations upon which it is based. Consider, the clash between him and Soret concerning Saint-Simon on October 20, 1830. Soret came out of it convinced that Goethe would gradually yield to persuasion, and even drew up for him a memorandum on Saint-Simon's ideas of reform. And this although Goethe wrote to Carlyle a few days earlier, "Keep away from Saint-Simonism"—his hatred of all Free Masonry, of all compromise between the spirit and materialistic activity is sufficient to explain this. And even though his temper, as an old individualist, breaks forth to the point of making him exclaim: "Let the father concern himself with his household, the artisan with his customers, the clergyman with brotherly love, and may the policeman leave us in peace", yet the following year, at an extremely advanced age, which is usually a time of rest for everyone, we find him reading Sinclair's exposition of the new doctrine. He will not admit himself to be won over entirely, and says as much in writing to his friend Zelter; but he admits that this doctrine denounces some undeniable



evils. The remedies, he feels, are inadequate since it is not possible to attribute to men the powers of a mystical providence. And if he received with applause the news of Father Enfantin's imprisonment, it was surely because he saw in him an unconscious impostor—such as we still have to day—and an example of pious vulgarity.

In any case, the evidence remains that efforts towards better political formulae continued to interest him as they had for a long time. If, as Loiseau points out, he deals in *The Apprentice Years of Wilhelm Meister* only with individualism and personal development, in *Years of Travel*, written between 1807 and 1829, society is placed above the individual. He found many of the popular claims worthy of sympathy, though the demagogues' clamour made him turn away in disgust. But besides, and this we often forget, we are by now dealing with an octogenarian. In any case, the ideal of *Faust* still stands intact: "standing in a free land, amid a people also free."

The Argentine philosopher, Francisco Romero, whose ideas have much in common with those of Joël, considers that humanity has, up to now, brought forth three conceptions of life: two already outmoded, the third scarcely begun. The first, which lasted until the end of the Middle Ages, is encompassed in

fear and prayer. The second, the Renaissance, which lasted until the nineteenth century and found its loftiest expression in Goethe and Kant, is one of solitude and monologue. Deity has been replaced by the deified ideals of reason, intelligence, culture. The third is all dialogue, conviviality, and we have scarcely reached it. In it, man, who has abandoned dependance on the divine, and in vain sought to organize by culture his new system of defence, discovers little by little another faith, in detaching his personal longings from himself, and casting them into the immense idea of humanity. These three visions may be summed up in a single question: Will good or will evil triumph? The first stage comes to a head in the Book of Job. Job, dispossessed of everything, ceases to be a shadow animated by the gifts of heaven and becomes transformed into a man who keeps his faith in the midst of adversities. The second stage comes to a head in *Faust*. Man has attempted to solve the problem of his individual destiny by means of a great voyage through philosophy and the sciences. All is in vain. Then he will be tempted, like Job, in order to determine whether, in the last instance, he will fall on the side of Good or Evil. The third type, although the example may be more modest, can be seen in *The undying Fire* of Wells, where man frees himself to such a degree from the obsession of indi-

viduality, that he does not conceive of himself as separated from his fellows, whose ideals and interests he has so fused with his own that he can no longer distinguish between them.

Let us accept this conception for the sake of simplicity, even though it simplifies and disguises the moral balance of the Classical World and even when our sense of harmony makes us suspect something arbitrary—an arbitrariness which only later centuries can reveal—in the limitations of the second stage, so brief compared to the one which preceded it. In any case what has been said here of *Faust* is only applicable to the youthful *Faust*. The second *Faust*, the one that cannot be finished, is already a man who has set forth with the will to arrive finally at where we are. We may note that between the first and second parts of *Faust*—as also between the first and second parts of *Wilhelm Meister*, as we have already seen—Goethe has entered into the social unrest which determines the change of mentality between his time and ours. The final ideal, the ideal of the third stage, is already spreading, like a hidden fire, at the beginning of the 19th century, and Goethe shows already, on his tunic, the first scorplings of the flame.

It is imperative that a disastrous confusion be ended once and for all. Those who are fond of subs-

tituting for the real study of an author a collection of anecdotes or of isolated phrases have argued a thousand absurdities from his incidental exclamation: "I prefer an injustice to a disorder." A judge had liberated a man whom the public had considered guilty. The mob wanted to lynch the criminal. Goethe intervened and saved him, haranguing the crowd with whatever arguments came to his mind first, and which might be thus interpreted: "I prefer the error of the judge to the one which the whole community was about to commit." Let the judge be mistaken, but not Fuenteovejuna. This is simply the attitude of a civilized man. It has nothing in common with those people who are forever shouting, "order", while clutching the bludgeon, the truncheon, the whip and other shameful implements which are the real cause of all disorders throughout history.

### *The Individual and the Community*

Those who persist in considering the individualism of Goethe as something tenacious and indomitable are judging more from certain impromptu manifestations arising in the heat of conversation than from the indications to be found in his work and in his personal conduct. They forget the utopias of *Wilhelm*





*Meister* where it is expressly declared that humanity consists of all men taken together. They forget Goethe's increasing urge, revealed in the second phase of his work and even in his conversation, to harmonize the individual with the community.

It is clear that he did not foresee the direction of our social revolutions. To expect otherwise would be to repeat the absurd error of Spencer who speedily closed the *Iliad* when it failed to provide him with any arguments for his theory of evolution. Our age feels itself hard-pressed by the problem of the community, and Goethe, who so greatly served the community through his work, dedicated his best thought to working on the raw material of the community, which is the individual. Each aids the other, and when these two aspects do not complete each other, it is because one or the other has been distorted, and this is sheer madness. (*Conversations*, Eckermann, 20—IV—1825).

There are two geometrical paths which lead to the centre of gravity: Either seek it at the core of the subject whose equilibrium is secured, (and thus we arrive finally at the mystical utterance: "Thus are you within me, Lord, and the senses did not know it"). Or seek it by way of exterior objects, the tables of reference to the found in our surroundings (and in this way we arrive at politics, a system of organizing

every existence to the end that a maximum social profit may result).

Goethe is at a point equidistant from the mystical and the political. It is a fact that he does not emerge from himself. He could exclaim with Montaigne, "I am my own physics, my own metaphysics"! In him centripetal vigor dominates centrifugal force, as he wrote in his letter to Herder. He adopted in regard to himself the standpoint of one with an educational mission. This in itself obliged him to keep in constant contact with all phases of reality, with all the arts and the sciences, with all that men can grasp of the universe. What mattered to him, as to his "Iphigenia", and as, before him to our Spanish Ruiz de Alarcón, was to abide by the truth, cost what it might. He would not pervert it to serve any community whatever. This is the essence of the "fearful acceptance" which Nietzsche admires in him. No use to tell him that the essence of the individuality must be sacrificed to the community, for such a thing seems to him as ridiculous as the behaviour of Cronos in devouring his own children. Not to mention the fear lest in the end the community devour itself. On the other hand, the individual must sacrifice himself socratically to his just convictions and to the best advantages of the community. This is an only slightly divergent idea but the divergency can



widen into a chasm. The public good is, with Goethe, the consequence and not the principle of conduct. If it were otherwise "desirous of satisfying the mob, I would have told them little stories and made sport of them as did the late Kotzebue." (Eckermann, 20—X—1830.)

Such a viewpoint does not indicate any excessively high opinion of the individual. Goethe is aware that all existence is equilibrium between collective forces which rest upon the indissoluble monad. Like the crow in the story, the individual is really dressed in borrowed plumes. Consider the lesson which he offers concerning Philocletes: "Young poets ... should not ask themselves whether a subject has already been used, nor scurry from pole to pole seeking unheard of adventures, which may turn out to the somewhat uncouth, and present—no further interest than that of merely being adventures." (Eckermann 31—I—1827.) Originality is a gift of selecting from the common heritage. Mirabeau the individual Mirabeau, is, in his oratorical performances, an organizer of borrowed material. "Even the Hercules of the ancients is nothing more than a collective being, a great executor of his own deeds and the deeds of others." (Eckermann, 17—XI—1832.) Concerning the individual it can only be affirmed that he must depend upon himself in all

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his actions. Ah, but this is a whole law of conduct !

Finally and in conclusion, the same object is always sought, although the strategy may be different. In all three cases—the two poles of mysticism and of politics, and the centre represented by Goethe—it is a matter of capturing a fortress. Foolish are they who presume to take it by the mere effort of their imagination, within their own heads, and without responding to duty, to duty which they have on their own heads. After all, the power of action was given us for some reason. Foolish, too, are they who want to conquer with arms which slip from their hands for want of personal dexterity, from lack of discipline and exercise of their own minds ! In proportion as each individual corrects himself, he will diminish the social problem to a marvellous extent. Such could be the moral we draw from Goethe.

*(Translated from the Spanish )*

G O E T H E ' S   S E C R E T

by JULES ROMAINS



In his address to the Bologna Congress of 1911, Bergson asserted, with profound insight—and on the strength, doubtless, of his own experience—that the great creations of philosophy could often be traced, if one took the trouble to do so, to the persistent presence in the author's mind of some great and simple idea, some governing intuition which, though at first it may have been obscure or vague in outline, gradually won ascendancy over that mind, establishing itself therein as the most important thing in the world ... to such an extent that the man's whole work from that time on was simply a striving to close in upon the idea, to examine and verify its content little by little, to render it more and more substantial and eloquent in his own view and in that of others; and the series of his writings is seen to form a progressive incarnation of the idea (each new work being the expression of the necessity to correct and complete the preceding incarnations).

This view may probably be applied to the great creations of the mind in general; and more generally still, to the lives of many exceptional men in whose respect, if we rest content with ordinary interpretations, we cannot always tell what allowance to make for the pressure exercised by environment, for adaptation to circumstances, and for an inward urge which we call genius, or ambition, or will to power, but which

none the less remains mysterious, so long as we refer to it in vague terms of intensity, without assigning to it visage or voice.

I am not forgetting that there exists in the realm of thought or in that of action a category of great men, or of relatively great men, who are first and foremost creatures of impulse, or subject to blind command. They are obedient either to the influences of their environment, or to certain mysterious impulses in their own nature, which assume varied aspects and often come into collision. There is small likelihood that the governing idea to which Bergson refers has taken root in them, and still less likelihood that if by chance it presented itself to them, they were sufficiently clear-sighted to recognize it as such, or sufficiently persevering to devote to it the effort of a whole lifetime.

To trace the governing idea that gave rise to a great work, when that is the case, is to capture an essential secret. We sometimes have the impression that the subject of our enquiry is inviting us to do so and helping us in our task. He confesses, over and over again, to some overruling interest. He returns to it under various pretexts, with an insistence that cannot be merely fortuitous. Sometimes he may even declare frankly that this it is which showed him the aim to be pursued, which revealed to him his rôle,

or his mission. To such an extent that it seems quite excessive to talk about a secret.

But on looking more closely, we always find that these confidences are not such as to dispense the exegetist from a keener, and thus a more hazardous effort of penetration. What the great man confides to us is a passing allusion or a cursory formula—which is sometimes merely a reply to other formulæ offered to him or brought against him by contemporary critics. What he hardly ever discloses is the governing idea itself, as it originally appeared to him in the innermost recesses of his mind. He does not even attempt to do this. And why not? In the first place, owing to a kind of reserve which is quite natural. He considers that this first vision must be kept to himself; that in that state of simplicity and nakedness it would be defiled if other eyes than his were to look upon it. But above all, he knows better than anyone how much of its content is inexpressible by a formula, “unenclosable” in a formula. For his entire work has been built up in order to set forth that first vision, to actualize its potential wealth. And his work has not sufficed for this, even though it perhaps already forms a considerable body; for at the moment when he ventures on the formula, he feels again the necessity of continuing the work itself, that is to say, of expressing himself further, of draining still

more deeply the content of the first vision, of going still further along the path from the potential to the real.

The feeling of reserve and the feeling of impossibility concur here all the more completely because, with certain exceptions, those great ideas which give birth to a literary creation or to an exceptional destiny assume a very disappointing aspect when we try to sum them up in a formula. And especially, as a general rule, when we are dealing with a man of the very highest distinction. As though genius did not hesitate to compromise its reputation by taking up with a truth of the most commonplace description; whereas merely eminent people are usually more wary. In short, far from being calculated to amaze the casual observer and fill him with awe, these so-called governing ideas strike him as platitudes which he himself would hardly condescend to touch upon. To the wit and the snob they convey none of that impression of depth in perspective which Jacques Rivière once described as causing a delightful dizziness.

For the greatness of such ideas must be computed, not according to the abstract, incidental statement to which we strive to reduce them, but according to the intensity with which they have been meditated from the beginning by one particular mind—which was a great mind—and the kind of inexhaustible



energy which they have thereby stored up or generated. Meditated by such a mind to such a degree of intensity, it is as though they had been meditated by mankind for the first time. So when we speak of rediscovering a "secret", we are thinking of the expenditure of penetrating sympathy that is required in order to reconstitute in its entirety, and with a sufficient degree of fidelity (though not, alas, without considerable impoverishment) a mental attitude so wide in scope that a mighty work of literature represents merely its progressive exposition.

In other words, the "secret" that remains to be discovered in such a case is not so much the presence of a certain idea within a particular mind, as the aspect that it assumed in order to gain possession of that mind—in order suddenly to achieve therein an incomparable importance, fecundity and power of persuasion.

If I am asked: "Do you consider that Goethe's work is founded on a secret of this kind?", my answer is "Yes". I will go further still. His very life was founded on this same secret, in so far as that life was the product of will-power and of choice.

If, on the other hand, you ask me to state in a few words as much of the secret as I believe myself to have penetrated, then I am horrified by the meagreness of my formula. For I can find nothing better than this: "It is necessary that from time to

time there shall appear a man who will undertake to muster all humanity in his own person" ... or, if you prefer it this way: "The duty exists of giving representation to the complete man, and this duty cannot be indefinitely postponed." You may add, if you wish, by way of conclusion: "This work of mustering and of representation is boundless in its import. It may even be that the dignity and the future of man are dependent thereupon."

Now you will be protesting that everyone has known that for long enough already; and that apart from the extreme banality of the idea itself, it is sheer impertinence to put it forward with such cautious phraseology when speaking of Goethe, since Goethe's hankering after universality is one of the critics' most hackneyed themes.

But even if it has been known for a long time, I am not so sure that it has been properly understood. I mean that I doubt whether anyone, when uttering the words that more or less correspond to the idea, has taken the trouble to restore to it the density of thought, the intensity of feeling, and the personal urgency that it contained.

We should try, without false optimism, to get back something of this:

Man is placed in nature; his head beneath the wheeling, star-sprinkled sky, his feet in the thick

grass. From the beginning, it has been his duty to seek for the attitude and the response which are best fitted to his situation. He is the only one among earthly creatures on whom such a task has devolved ; whatever may be its ultimate intent. (The other creatures have had their attitude and response dictated to them.) So far as man is concerned, neither attitude nor reply has ever been discovered, or conjectured, except by simple, complete man. And a sufficient agreement arose and endured between nature and man only inasmuch as the two partners, in confronting each other, preserved their own integrity.

Now, man possesses yet another peculiar quality—that of not remaining the same, of developing and expanding. Unhappily, man's expansion always gives rise to a division within him. The human spirit has multiplied and complicated its contacts with nature. It has invented, in increasing quantity, attitudes, postures of attention, styles of response. It has certainly enriched itself, both in contemplation and in action. But this profit has lost again, all unawares. For it has not been used to magnify the complete man, nor the aggregate of man's knowledge of nature. The burden, too heavy, has broken man into several pieces. The wealth of which we are speaking has been distributed among fragments of man. There

no longer exists, in confrontation with nature, a complete man, able to feel nature completely and to respond to her. It is rather as though man had been replaced by another species, or by a family of another species, by a multitude of ingenious and incomplete creatures, each gifted with one or another highly-developed sense, but deaf and blind in other respects. And therefore unable to form a substitute for man. Considering the place of man in nature, particularly in the consciousness of nature, this is a sort of cosmic disaster.

The first duty—at once the loftiest and the most urgent—is to take steps to oppose this specious decadence. To remake the complete man. By going back to the beginning? Not at all. By losing nothing, or as little as possible, of the wealth acquired in the meantime. Such a duty obviously cannot be undertaken by any ordinary man. From time to time it falls to the lot of some hero, who has solemnly and secretly recognized himself to be capable of it. (The idea of occult appointment by some divine revelation not being ruled out.)

Here, we must not be carried away by the attraction of a pseudosolution which, in the past, has ensnared a number of brilliant minds: the attempt to acquire universal learning, encyclopaedic knowledge; the effort to pack into one single head the sum of

information accumulated by a number of specialists. In the first place, knowledge is not everything—far from it. Outside this sum of information there would remain feeling, which in itself alone is a universe peopled with wonders, and power regulated by wisdom—that is to say, the art of directing the actions of man in accordance with the position he occupies in nature. Besides, to muster the sum of all knowledge—even were it possible—would by no means amount to mustering the complete man. A piece of knowledge is merely a result, previously acquired and capable of transmission; but the faculty of acquiring it is not transmissible in the same degree. A bird might tell us what he saw during his passage across the sky: but that would not make us able to fly. The complete man will not be he who learns out of books everything that the specialists know (besides, this is a childish and ridiculous ambition—increasingly so). It will be he who, within himself, succeeds in reviving the various powers and aptitudes of man; he who, by inward exercise, gains control of man's various ways of listening, questioning, feeling nature, and responding to her. The complete man—or his not all-unworthy approximation—must be able himself to assume the attitude that forms the starting-point of a poem, a tragedy, a work of historical research, a scientific discovery, a philosophical meditation . . . in

short, not all the individual attitudes, but each of the main attitudes of the human mind. That is not all. He must also, if he can, learn by experience how a State is governed. Neither will he be satisfied with looking on at the daily round of life. He must enter fully into life itself, experience the passions, arouse them in others, discover how they may be made to benefit the spirit or how they can be controlled. He must know how interests are defended, property and honours acquired ; how our natural selfishness compounds with love and charity ; how our innate craving for happiness adapts itself to the sufferings and frustations of life, to peril of death, to social constraints. And last but not least, how virtue and self-respect come to terms with caution and expediency. For the art of living—one of the greatest and most exacting of all arts—must include an understanding of all the conditions to which life is subject, an estimation of the opposing forces, the skill to man-œuvre among them, utilizing or evading them turn by turn, as the sailor does.

Thus, one cannot claim to be a complete man without having complete experience. In other words, one cannot become the representative of all mankind merely by collecting proxies.

On the other hand, the complete man is an impossibility except where there already exists an ex-

ceptionally complete assemblage of gifts that are in themselves exceptional. We will agree to refer to this as "genius". We will refuse, at any rate in our inmost hearts, to bestow the term of "genius" upon any individual who represents merely the extreme development, the exacerbation—sometimes the transmutation into delirium—of a special aptitude.

In particular, there can be no genius worthy of the name, without the sovereign presence of intelligence. Intelligence is not a special aptitude. It is, by nature, an aptitude and an eager striving for completeness. It must not, of course, be reduced to the arid exercise of the intellect. It implies every kind of intuitive and befulgurating form. Without the intelligence, it would be useless to dream of sewing together again the pieces that go to make up the complete man. Intelligence is the needle and the thread. It is, too, the mobile point with which the spirit probes into the innermost recesses of nature.

Should it surprise us that Goethe chose the poetic function as the apex of this assemblage of the complete man? In the first place, there was the special reason that Goethe, believing that in the secrecy of his own heart he could accept this mission of assemblage, came to realize that in his case it developed quite naturally around a predominant poetic faculty. (In this connexion we should note that if he had

confessed the extent of his project, he would have been called a megalomaniac by his contemporaries. It is we—posterity—who, without much merit, consider Goethe's vocation for universality as something that could be taken for granted and had no need of mystery.) But it is also very possible that the perceived *Dichtung*, objectively, as the highest mood of the power of man, that which is destined to crown the edifice—being that which best symbolizes (or least unworthily replaces, should the atheists be right) the double process of divinity : to know and to create.

To sum up : as a formula, it was perhaps banal ; as a programme it was much less so. Count up the men who, since the dawn of civilization, have been bold enough to conceive of such a thing, even when they were highly conscious of their resources, and even at periods when the undertaking was less wildly excessive. And not merely to conceive it, in a fit of boyish lyricism, but to remain faithful to it throughout a very long lifetime, to carry it out with the patience of a labouring god. I can think of only one precedent—that of Leonardo da Vinci. By comparison—let us have the courage to admit it—Aristotle, Dante, Shakespeare were specialists. (Of course the comparison would lose some of its value were it not that in a few at least of their supreme



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achievements, Leonardo and Goethe rose to heights that no one has surpassed.) I am not suggesting that the men of specialized genius be less honoured because of this. But we may admit, all the same, that if Leonardo and Goethe had never existed, our conception of man would be less than it is.

*(Translated from the French)*



G O E T H E ' S  
M E S S A G E T O T H E  
“ N E W N E G R O E S ”

by LÉOPOLD SEDAR SENGHOR



**I**t is not my purpose to shed any new light on Goethe's work. Others, better qualified than I, will not fail to do that. My intention is to speak simply of the lesson that we drew—I and other French-speaking Negro intellectuals—from our reading of Wolfgang Goethe during the dark days of the Nazi domination.

It was at the end of 1941 ; for the last year I had been at Poitiers, in a camp reserved for "Colonial" prisoners of war. My study of German had advanced so far that I was at last able to read Goethe's poems in the original. This was a revelation, and led me to re-read, with greater attention than before, the Master's principal works. In my tiny library, I now set *Faust* and *Iphigenia* side by side with the *Aeneid*, Pascal's *Pensées* and Plato's *Dialogues*, which were already established as my bedside books.

It was literally a conversion. Two years previous to this, I had still been plunged in the intoxicating delights of the Realm of Childhood, filled with racial consciousness, consumed by the burning lava of an inner volcano. It is the process of this conversion, in which Goethe had so great a share, that I wish to describe here.

Two years previously I had been merely engaged in the search for *myself*: so it had been with all of us ; we were looking only for food to nourish our

own fervour, using everything that came our way as fuel for our own flame. We associated only with our fellow-Negroès. We studied the methods of the griots and wizards. We allowed ourselves to be swept by the beat of the tom-tom into Voodoo trances, and we lamented for our sufferings with the voice of the trumpet, now furious, now nostalgic.

In this adventurous quest for the Graal of Negroism, we made allies of all those in whom we perceived some affinity with ourselves. And why not make allies of the Germans, in spite of Hitler? We were captivated by the brilliantly-expressed theory of Leo Frobenius, who argued that the spirit of the Negro race was closely akin to that of the German. Were they not both children of the *Ethiopian civilization*, which signifies “the yielding to a païdenmatic essence”, the gift of emotion, the feeling for reality—whereas the *Hamitic civilization*, to which Western rationalism is related, signifies domination, the gift of inventiveness, the feeling for facts.

Leo Frobenius had marshalled us in a new Sturm und Drang and led us to Wolfgang Goethe, a Goethe as handsome as Ganymede, more brilliant than Alcibiades, and bold to the point of temerity. In the wake of the Rebel, we rose in revolt against the order and the standards of the West, and more especially against its way of *reasoning*.



*Ansicht der Stadt Frankfurt am Main  
von der Abendseite*



*Vue de la Ville de Francfort sur le Main  
du Côté de l'Occident*

*L. Scheller auf Meissen Steindruck u. 1791 fortgesetzt 1797.*

*Original gezeichnet von M. Jean Claude Goussier, 1797, de la ville.*





With *Götz von Berlichingen* and *Egmont*, we advanced to the attack of capitalist imperialism, the foremost of our demands being the cultural autonomy of the Negro race, which we rated higher even than the political independence of the black peoples. Each of us seeing himself as a new *Prometheus*, an ebony-visaged *Faust*, against the platitudes of reasoning we evoked the towering trees of our forests; against the smiling wisdom of the "pale, pink-eared God" we set the bush-fires raging in our heads and above all the irrepressible surge of the blood through our veins.

We used to recite to ourselves:

"Hast thou not alone accomplished all things,  
O sacred Flame that burnest in my heart?"

And:

"Healed, that I will not be! My powerful spirit  
Will then become as abject as the rest."

The years from 1930 to 1939 were an intoxicating period for the "new" Negro in France. Armed with the "miraculous weapons" of automatic writing, more ferocious than machine-guns, we hurled poisoned assagais and seven-branched casting-knives; we set all the volcanoes of Ethiopia in eruption and buried all the *St. Peters*, each Ascension Day, under the fiery showers of our resentment. Or so we supposed.

The defeat of France and the West in 1940 stupefied us Negro intellectuals at first. Soon, goaded by

the catastrophe, we awoke from our dreams, stripped and sobered. It was to this that we had been led—into a slaughter-house stench, among the salvoes of firing-squads—by our hatred of reason and our blood-thirsty philosophy. We had nothing to steady us in the abyss except the strong ropes that stretched down to us from the great teachers of thought—nothing to guide us in the darkness except their gleaming lamps; and it mattered little from what direction the help came. So we began—we prisoners, at any rate—to re-read the classics with the clear-headedness of men just awakened.

Among them was Goethe, seen henceforth as the complete man by our now wide open and no longer infatuated eyes. In advanced years he remained young and admirable in the beauty of that poise which he had attained by polytechnical culture rather than through an encyclopaedic education. And we meditated the lesson of his life and work.

He taught us first of all the danger of cultural isolation, of falling back upon ourselves, of the determination to build only upon our own race, our own nation, our own particular qualities. He had familiarized himself with every form of bodily and mental exercise, from riding to the physical sciences; he had learnt Latin, Greek and Hebrew, and was interested in Oriental literature. His aim was to deck

himself with all the colours of the rainbow. And above all, he—the German—felt within him, so strong as to be almost agonizing, the old attraction of the Mediterranean and the sunny lands for the “Northern barbarians”, the ancient call of reason to the heart. And he responded to it. He responded to it with his life which, from its prime onwards, was made up of assiduous and methodical activity. He responded to it above all with his writings.

His scientific writing I will only mention by way of reminder. Whatever doubt there may be as to its merits, it is of interest to us as an example. For us it holds this meaning: that we cannot construct the New City of Negroism solely on literary and artistic foundations—that it must be an expression of our economic and social evolution, integrating, by active assimilation, the scientific progress attained in Europe; that it must be a thing of dynamism and movement, and thereby humanize nature by transforming it for the service of mankind.

But Goethe’s message lay, for us, above all in his literary work, for that was what we had read before with eyes dimmed by our whirling blood.

Here we have Goethe back from Italy, enriched by all he has seen and read, by the new thoughts that have come to him. It was a productive uprooting, that led him to his most fruitful season, in which he

gave forth his masterpieces. If I have correctly understood his message, he does not seek to turn us aside from the bubbling springs of folk-lore, the contingent reality of the soil, but merely to put us on our guard against the babblings of the heart and the spate of words which are not *the word*. The Greek or Roman quality of these later works is conferred upon them not so much by the characters and their plasticity, as by the design and the rhythm—the style, which gives them the stamp of the necessary, the eternal. This is true of *Iphigenia*, of the *Roman Elegies*, and above all, of the second part of *Faust*.

“Every man has his own way of being Greek, but Greek he must be”, is Goethe’s advice to the “new” Negroes. This does not mean that they are to abandon the haughty expression of their resentment, suppress the sombre geysers of their blood, silence the tom-toms of Night. Not so ; but that they are to be the splendid masters of the tellurian forces through which Negroism finds expression ; that henceforth the image will not dwell in them as an independent force, ruining the idea ; that the spirit will bear the form within itself. “Controlled romanticism”. By this definition of classicism, André Gide was merely giving new expression to Goethe’s guiding thought. “Controlled romanticism”—the perfect balance of two complementary values, heart and head, instinct .

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and imagination, reality and fact ; the perfect balance of Zeus casting his thunderbolt . . . such is the lesson drawn for us by Goethe from ancient art.

And so—I mused, near the barbed-wire fence of the camp—our most characteristic voice, our most Negro work, will be at the same time the most human—akin, in world literature, to *Hermann and Dorothea*. And the Nazi sentry stared at me half-wittedly. And I smiled at him, and he didn't understand . . .

A strange encounter and a lesson charged with meaning. The blind affinities of Leo Frobenius had brought division between us Negroes and the Germans. And now another German had reconciled us. He had travelled down from the far North, in quest of the sun. We had come from the South towards the more temperate lands. And here we had met, on the shores of the Median Sea, the navel of the world. And we held brotherly talk together in the warm, glowing air. And we delighted in the mildness of that sea of mingled race, the Mediterranean.

(*Translated from the French*)



T H E   L A S T  
P R I N C E   O F   P O E T S

by STEPHEN SPENDER





There is a very complete fusion in Goethe's own mind of his life as living experience and his poetry as an expression of that experience. This idea is conveyed in the title he gave to his autobiography, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. It is admirably summed up by Eckermann in words which may seem today to confuse the rôle of public man with that of poet striving towards a kind of public objectivity.

"Whoever's task it may be to have charge of many activities, to judge, to lead, he must also endeavour to gain as many insights as possible into these many tasks. Thus a prince and a rising statesman can never make himself sufficiently many-sided : many-sidedness appertains to his craft.

"Likewise the poet must strive for a multi-fold awareness. For the whole world is his material, which he must hold under his hand and learn to create in speech."

We must squarely confront ourselves with the fact that Goethe was a poet of the world. This is the fact above all that puts him among those princes of poets, Dante and Shakespeare and Racine, who used for their poetry the material of the whole world of their time, and which distinguishes him from the poets who followed him.

The distinction is made still clearer if it is qualified by saying that he is not only a poet of the power and

the glory which are the world, but that he looks at these things from above, that is from the point of view of the prince, the ruler, the person who accepts responsibility for the exercise of power. He does not share the attitude of the servant of power, or of the pacifist who opposes it, or of the revolutionary who wishes to usurp existing power with his own power. Moreover, Goethe's is the point of view of traditional power and not of a new ruling class which is as yet unused to power.

That Goethe entered into the world of his time on the highest social level, and that this world entered into his poetry, does not mean that he did not criticize the rulers of his time. On the contrary, he was extremely critical of most contemporary princes. What it means is simply that he viewed the society in which he lived from a certain standpoint : one which accepted the responsibility of political and aristocratic power, at the centre of his time where he found it and entered into it. The experience of power and aristocracy and wealth and health are to his poetry what breadth, and depth and the speed of current are to a great river. Since the centres of power are the social centres of one's time, then Goethe was at the centre of his time in a way in which no later poet has been—or perhaps, owing to our disrupted social conditions, could be.

And he was not at the centre just in sharing the responsibilities of power of the court of Weimar. He was also a central mind within the knowledge of his time. Though here one has to qualify this judgement considerably by the critical opinion of modern scientists (e.g. Sherrington) who consider that in his scientific thinking Goethe inhabited an intellectual backwater.

A very wide experience of what it meant to rule, to be at the apex of the learning of a cultivated aristocratic class in Europe, was the daily experience which flowed through Goethe's mind and body : and it was out of this that he made his poetry.

Now it is scarcely too much to say that in his own time, and ever since, people have hated Goethe for being in this position. The revolutionaries hate him because they consider him counter-revolutionary ; the democrats because they consider him a snob ; the devout because they consider him worldly ; the romantic because they consider him bourgeois ; the sick because they consider him well ; the partial because they consider him impartial ; the æsthetically minded "art-for-art's-sakers", because they consider him a Philistine.

Without entering into the justice or the injustice of the hostile criticisms of Goethe (has not Mr. T. S. Eliot recently written that Goethe should have not written poetry but have confined himself to being a writer of

wise maxims like La Rochefoucauld?), I wish simply to fix attention on his position in his world. Subsequent positions may attract our sympathies more ; but I think we have to admit that they reject more of a certain full and powerful experience of the world. For example, Baudelaire, who passes his life in debt, hating his mother, alternatively loving and detesting his mulatto mistress, reviling the bourgeoisie, and who ends his life insane, led a life much more characteristic than Goethe's of contemporary literary genius. Yet Baudelaire is not entirely unworldly in the Goethean sense ; he is conscious indeed of being forced to reject an experience of the world which he himself feels might have added to the already great scope of his poetic experience. He yearns after "*les époques nues*" and compares himself to "*un roi exilé*". There is a consciousness in his work not only that the world is diseased but that poetry inevitably must become to some extent diseased with it. The disease, in short, is that poetry has been forced out of the centres of civilization, the centres of temporal and spiritual power, into the hospitals and the brothels. One may prefer the poetry which accepts the position of the "*roi exilé*" to that of Goethe. Nevertheless there is something magnificent about Goethe's effort to keep poetry at the centre of power in his time. Moreover Goethe himself is conscious of the position of poetry.

If he is the last of the poetic kings, he is forever warning: "Après moi le déluge."

It is doubtless the fault of society that no poet since Goethe has been at the centre of the experience of his time in the way that he was. But the impossibility of being like him should not detract from our appreciation of his position.

Looked at in this way, Goethe was the last of the poets into whose minds their whole time flowed: its power, its knowledge, its faith. The tormenting struggle and anguish by which an age orders men's lives and prepares the mind of a whole generation of men to create and build and believe and then pass on into death, seemed to stir in the works of these poets like motes of dust in a beam of light.

Sincethen we have had greater poetry than Goethe's. But it has expressed other, more peripheral attitudes: rebelliousness, sickness, renunciation, resignation, disgust, quietism, nightmare, mystical belief.

Goethe's acceptance of the social forms of his time went beyond his being a nationalist or even a defender of the aristocracy. He did not like the French Revolution—but he cared for the attempts to restore the monarchy still less. He did not like the invasion of Germany by Napoleon—but he wrote no nationalist diatribes against it, and he accepted the invitation to the famous meeting with Napoleon. Defending

himself at a later date, he said that although he was glad Germany was liberated from the French, he really could not find it in his heart to hate the enemy : and he would not write of what he did not feel in his heart.

He was really a European of the enlightened aristocracy, who accepted the evolution of Europe beyond nationalism, and of democracy beyond the aristocracy, although his sympathies were always conservative. His sense of the nation to which he belonged extended far beyond Germany. He foresaw the development of a world literature. The figures who were his equals in his world were perhaps Napoleon, perhaps Byron : and in Germany only Schiller.

Thus the world beyond Germany and even a political order beyond the aristocracy to some extent realized themselves in him. All the same, there was tension in his acceptance of dominating forces, a tension which would perhaps ultimately have led to the collapse of his Olympian pose. He felt threatened. He felt at the edge of chaos. Within himself were demonic urges not only to creation but also to suicide and madness. What he thought to be a natural relationship of the poetic, creative life with the spiritual and temporal forces of society he knew to be an order that was passing away. "Our time is so bad that the poet, in the life of the humanity which surrounds him, encounters nothing of a nature which is useful

for his poetry. Thus in order to construct something for himself, Schiller seized on philosophy and history." Here Goethe touches on the main problem of modern poetry: the search of the poet to attach himself to systems of belief which are extensively related to modern life, although modern materialist society does not respect them or incorporate their principles within the structure of its morals.

On the edges of his achievement, Goethe sometimes repels us by the impersonality, the officiousness of his rôle as a kind of function of his courtly society. But at the centre of him there is a struggle and an awareness of the destructive element.

Moreover there was the lifelong effort to absorb diverse experiences and to create out of them a single unity, holding together a vast complexity, while suffusing each part with light. To him genius was a kind of gathering together of intractable material, dark forces, irresolvable problems, and bringing them upwards into the light of intellectual intelligence. It is a fusing together of irreconcilable divisions which forever seek to tear us apart, into one luminous conscious explicit entity. During a time of grave illness, in his old age and amongst friends, he spoke half aloud to himself: "I only wonder whether this entity, so torn asunder and tortured, will be able to reappear as an entity and take new shape."

When we come to the poetry itself, it is well to attempt to convey its quality. It is the poetry of a man to whom speech, self-expression, came easily. Goethe simply pours his thought—whether it be maxims, meditations, love speeches, or the rôle of some character he assumes—into moulds of poetry. His poetry is a heightening of spontaneous eloquence by the addition of poetic form. With many of his poems it is easy to imagine that they could be written in a different form from the particular one he has chosen. The form fits the thought as a shoe fits a foot: it is not the thought any more than a shoe is a foot. There is no fundamental difference of quality and nature between poetry and prose speech for him. Some thought is more suited to poetry, some to prose, that is all. In fact, he often wrote his poetry first as prose, and then decided afterwards that it needed to be heightened by poetic form. It is true he said that for a poet the form of a poem should suggest itself immediately and unconsciously, but by this he meant only that the poet had an extraordinary instinct for the correct pattern, not that poetic form was inseparable from the thought in a poem.

There is an important distinction between artists whose thought naturally flows into their chosen art and those who create with much effort an idiom of their art which is for them like creating a separate,



world within the world. To some extent it may be the essential difference between the effortlessness of pre-modern art and the effortfulness of the modern idioms. The dividing time lies in Goethe's own day when art—that is, to be an artist—began to be a very conscious and difficult procedure. We see the change most clearly in music. Mozart flowed from his life into his music; Beethoven struggled with musical form as though he were chiselling notes out of stone; and it was even more difficult for Brahms to create his idiom than for Beethoven.

Goethe is close to Mozart. He thinks in poetry, and at any moment he chooses he can divert his everyday speech from conversation into a poem. His poetry can be powerfully orchestrated or a thin trickle. It contains naturally, effortlessly, all the tones of his soul. At times it is rapturous, throbbing, ecstatic; at times grave, profound; at times gay and witty; at times opening into despair, chaos, brutishness; at times sententious and officious. It is simply the immense autobiographic self-expression of a many-voiced man belonging to our whole civilization, and capable of assuming many of its rôles. There is within its depths, as one finds in Claudel, a great ex-haling exclamation, invocation—an “Ah!”.

Goethe regarded poetry as one of many possible activities of what he called the “demonic”. To avoid

confusion, I should add that by "demonic" he did not mean "diabolic". He explains, indeed, that his own Mephisopheles is not demonic, because he is too negative, he is the "spirit which denies". What he means by demonic is something far closer to Blake's conception of "divine energy", which Blake finds to exist in Milton's Satan (Satan is more demonic than Mephistopheles). Although Goethe avoided identifying the demonic with the satanic, he undoubtedly did mean creative and even destructive forces in life which are "beyond good and evil". In his own time, he quoted Napoleon and Lord Byron as examples of the demonic. His conception of the demonic moving through all life avoided the idea that the "creative" only exists in poetry and the arts. To him men of action, builders of cities, conquerors and rulers could be creative just as much as the creative artist, so long as they had the demonic quality of the spirit which bloweth where it listeth. "The demonic is that which is not released by understanding and rationality. It is not a quality of my nature but I can submit myself to it." — The demonic belongs to all times and places, and all activities can be submitted to it. Thus in relating it to poetry Goethe submitted the concept of poetry itself to a universal creative spirit within the world which extended far beyond poetry.

But if Goethe has a conception of the demonic

which is of a dark, amoral, and universal subconscious force moving through individuals, his whole effort is to bring this into light, to make it objective. Within his work there is the movement of a whole European tradition—which includes both the Bible and classical Greece, and geographically the whole world—into the light of consciousness. “The epoch of world literature is approaching”, he said, “and everyone of us must occupy himself in aiding this development.”

Realizing the enormous increase of complexity in the material of modern literature, in a world where we know more history, more geography and more psychology, he knew also that few can achieve the objectivity necessary in order to bring such material into light. On the contrary, most writers will be depressed, confused, overwhelmed, thrown back on to themselves by the increasing complexity of modern life.

He knew this struggle and this danger in himself. Speaking of the two parts of *Faust*, he says: “The first part is almost too subjective: it all comes out of an imprisoned, sorrowing individual . . . In the second half, almost nothing is subjective, there appears here a broader, clearer, less passionate world.”

In the First part, Faust turns by means of his pact with the devil to magical means of becoming young, enjoying love, wealth, power, and so on. This is

subjective, because magic does not enable Faust to get outside himself. It only, as it were, concretizes his own wishes, enables him to live in a dream which is not the external world of nature, but the things he wants made accessible by the devil. The one wish which involves contact with the reality of another person—his love for Gretchen—leads to the destruction of Gretchen in the fulfilment of Faust's wish to seduce her. Although she can be seduced by magic, she is real, she is not a dream, she cannot *become* magic, she remains herself, and therefore Faust can only destroy her, and she can bring him no happiness.

Now Faust is really a story of redemption, not of damnation. The First Part is the story of the redemption not of Faust but of Gretchen, who is finally saved by the voice from heaven which announces that her soul cannot be destroyed by Faust's magic. In the Second *Faust*, Goethe is confronted by the main problem, which is the redemption of Faust, who is still at the end of the First Part a subjective dreamer. He is also an isolated individualist, the apex of his own world, and his problem is still that there is no reality for him outside what he makes for himself through his diabolic instruments of knowledge.

We can see here that we are very close to the problem of modern Twentieth Century man, who is subjective, out of touch with nature and external

things, because his power over nature enables him to build a world of his own wishes and fantasies which overwhelm him and might even destroy him. Moreover, the most conscious and intelligent individuals in this world are, like Faust, specialists whose knowledge isolates them in a world of their own, away from ordinary men.

How then in Part Two does Faust become objective and cease to be a sorrowing, subjective, impassioned nature? The answer is twofold: in the first place the world of knowledge within Faust's mind is reborn as though it became independent of it. His knowledge, instead of breeding fantasies for him, puts him in touch with a part of tradition which is still capable of being so real, so intrinsically itself, that it exists as it were outside him and is therefore capable of changing him, just as nature can change us by being outside us. This tradition which can save Faust is, for Goethe, the classical Greek world, a world hard, clear and objective, removed from pity and sympathy, terrifying but not pitying—not guiltladen, nightmare-ridden, like the mediaeval Christian world of the First Part of *Faust*. Secondly, Faust is redeemed by throwing himself into social projects such as building and reclaiming land.

I hesitate to say that Faust contains a message. But like Goethe's own life, it does express, among other

things, an attitude towards problems which are with us. Faust, like Goethe, achieved objectivity by reconciling in his life two aims. One was to discover the reality in the past of a tradition which could not become his own subjective nature, not yet offer him an escape into a past world ; but which, by its clear, hard bright Greek example was at once comprehensible and unapproachable, urging him by its example to create within the present a world parallel to the achievements of the past. The other aim was more obvious, and may seem to some even banal : that one can become objective through the uphill task of helping the world : just as Goethe at Weimar had occupied himself with tasks of building roads and bridges.

G O E T H E  
A N D T H E E A S T

by TAHA HUSSEIN BEY





**I**bn Sina used to say : "I would rather have a wide, short life than a long, narrow one."

He had his wish ; his life was as wide and varied as could well be, but he died before he was sixty ; and that, in his view, was not a very great age.

Goethe's life was both wide and long ; for he possessed one essential quality that was lacking in the great Moslem philosopher—a sense of balance—and its possession made his life as harmonious as a fine piece of music.

Goethe liked to have a full life, but he never allowed it to overflow. He offers an almost unique example of a man who managed to taste everything, to develop his physical, moral and intellectual being to the furthest possible degree, right up to old age, without jarring, without dissonance, without being caught in those eddies which convulse, impair or disturb our existence. Yet around him, everything was in a state of convulsion. Wars, unrest, transformation of minds, morals and customs, French Revolution, Napoleonic campaigns . . . all these went on about him, affected his life, stirred his emotions, yet failed to destroy his admirable balance. On the contrary, all these things enriched him, helped him to develop and to shed around him the radiance of his incomparable genius.

His private life had its painful passages. He

experienced illness, and disappointments which left their mark ; he met with all kinds of difficulties ; he had his share of suffering. Sometimes he was plunged in sorrow, came near to despair. But he was quick to rally. And in the long run, these trials were simply so much experience for him. It was through them that his feelings were refined, his heart enriched and his intelligence sharpened.

It was as though the world existed solely in order to enable him to develop his personality. It must be admitted that nature had endowed him with a temperament well suited to the life he was to lead.

From his earliest childhood, Goethe was marked off from his companions by his powerful imagination, keen intelligence, prodigious memory and extraordinary capacity for learning and assimilating what he learnt. Later on, his will-power played an important part in the organization of his faculties ; but long before the age at which will-power comes into action, his genius was asserting itself. Proof of this is to be found in the stories he used to tell his companions during their games, and which were later on to figure prominently in his finest books. Further proof is given by his extraordinary aptitude for learning foreign languages—an aptitude which gave him the idea of a novel which was to consist of letters written in German, French, English, Italian, Latin,

Greek and Yiddish. Feeling his knowledge of this last to be deficient, he asked his father to allow him to take lessons in Hebrew, giving as a reason his wish to read the Bible in the original ; this wish met with encouragement, and he began his study of the Hebrew tongue. Shortly afterwards, he was translating the Old Testament at sight, and this was the origin of the interest he began to feel, first in the East, and later in Orientalism.

This taste for Orientalism soon became evident. For very soon after beginning to read the Old Testament in the original, he was visited by doubts, and asked his teacher to elucidate certain points. Let us turn to his own account of this :

“This work gave me occasion to ask for the explanation of certain passages which had always appeared to me to be contradictory and inconsequent, such as that in which the sun stands still at Gibeon or the moon in the valley of Ajalon. The worthy doctor at first attempted to prevent these digressions ; later, he was diverted by them, without, however, affording me the slightest explanation, for when, from time to time, he interrupted his little dry coughs and his hollow laughing, it was only to exclaim : ‘What a droll boy ! Oh ! what a droll boy !’ However, the warmth with which I expressed my doubts at length induced him to give me a guide that

should help me to a deeper study of those matters upon which he was obliged to keep silence for fear of compromising himself ; this guide was a great Bible that he had in his library—a remarkable work, containing all the books of the Old Testament, accompanied by commentaries that were both judicious and satisfying. This work had originated in England ; it had been perfected by certain German theologians, for when translating it into their own tongue, they had added to it their own commentaries, together with the arguments upon which these were founded.”\*

We might even go further and say that the persistent reflection which he devoted to the text of the Old Testament enabled Goethe to form a conception of the beginning of civilization and of the development of social and political life, and thence to arrive at his earliest humanism ; a humanism which was simple, even naïf, but noble and pure, since it was founded on the Bible. That humanism evolved and expanded, but it always retained the biblical element of faith—the necessary condition, according to Goethe, of all fruitful social existence. He writes in the notes accompanying the “Divan”, towards the end of his life :

“The proper, sole and essential theme of the history of the world and of mankind, that to which all others are subordinate, is the struggle between

\* *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Part I, Book 4.

6. والله اعلم الغيوب  
 Ihre Gnaden

Du hast Antheil an ihrem Theil  
 Die beide froh d'wundern haben,  
 Hat Allah ~~den~~ <sup>zu demselben</sup> ~~ihnen~~ <sup>zu demselben</sup> Heil  
 Den Gnaden nicht verziehen

Den Turban und, der besser schmeichelt  
 Als alle Haarergrenzen;  
 Ein Feld, das man vom Orte ringelt  
 Um überall zu wohnen;

Ein Schwert, das kühnlicher beschützt  
 Als Fels und hohe Mauermauern;  
 Ein Liedchen, das gefällt und nützt,  
 Worauf die allmächtigen lauern.

Und Blumen ring sich umgestüst  
 Von Thron Schawl herunter;  
 Sie weiß recht wohl was Ihr gehört  
 Und blüht mir hold und munter?

Und Blum' und Thausicht weiß sich auch  
 Ganz gütlich aufzumischen,  
 Wollt ihr Allorathen zu gleicher  
 So steht sie von den Früchten



7.6 Febr.  
 1874



faith and incredulity. All epochs in which faith reigns, in whatever form, are brilliant, great and fruitful for their contemporaries and for posterity. Whereas all those epochs in which incredulity, in whatever form, wins its melancholy victory, even should they glitter for a time with deceptive radiance, vanish from the eyes of posterity, because no one is concerned with the possibility of studying sterility."

The study of the Old Testament did not merely appeal to Goethe's intelligence, developing in him an elementary humanism ; its stimulating influence was also felt by his imagination and his poetic temperament. Like other poets—Orientals—he was attracted by the story of Joseph ; he related it in a prose-poem which gave him some satisfaction ; to this he added various other poems, and made them into a little volume which he had copied and bound, as a present for his father.

At the age of twenty-three he became acquainted with the *Koran*, in German and Latin translation. Thus, after the biblical and Christian East, he discovered the Moslem East. His reading of the *Koran* made a strong impression on him. Soon afterwards, he tried his hand at a tragedy, with *Mohammed* as its hero ; the fragments that have been preserved show that he was already beginning to have a deep sympathy for Islam, though this was accompanied by

certain reservations. This sympathy never left him. On the contrary, his sympathy for Islam increased with his increasing knowledge of the Moslem world; and he goes so far as to write in the *Divan*: "If the meaning of Islam is submission to God, then we all live and die in Islam."

Here he is at one with the great Christian poet *Akhtal*, who lived during the first century of the Hegira. One day *Akhtal*, in the presence of a Caliph, recited the following lines:

"As you will need a treasure, the greatest treasure you can find is a good deed."

The Caliph said to him: "You become a Moslem, O *Akhtal*." Whereupon the poet replied: "Commander of the Faithful, I have always been Moslem in my religion."

Goethe expresses this comprehension in a clearer and more definite manner when he says to Chancellor Muller "Confidence and self-surrender are the true foundations of every lofty religion; submission to a higher will, which orders events and which we do not understand, for the very reason that it transcends our reason and our intellect. In this respect, there exists a very close resemblance between Islam and the reformed church." \*

\* *The Divan*, translator's Preface to the French edition (Ed. Montaigne).



Once he had learned to know the Moslem world, Goethe never lost touch with it. Neither those events which particularly concerned him—travels, reading, work—nor the great events which were convulsing the world around him, could destroy his interest in that section of humanity which he had come to love. He closely followed all that was being written or translated on the subject : reading the works of the French travellers, Chardon and Tavernier—of the Italians, Marco Polo and della Valle—of the Dutchman Abraham Roger and the German Olearius.

He collected translations ; he even attempted to make translations from Arabic without knowing the language : he was filled with enthusiasm on reading Jones's English translation of seven so-called pre-Islamic poems, known as the *Moalakat*, and tried to make a German version of them.

All through this period his mind was extremely active in many different directions. He was studying science, visiting Italy, writing masterpieces, drawing, corresponding with his numerous friends, and carrying out his duties at the Court of Weimar ; he was in love, suffering, and finding consolation. But he never lost sight of the East, nor of Islam, till the day came when Persian poetry was revealed to him. And then he was seized by an absolute passion for the eastern Moslem world—a passion which had to find

expression, to break out in some objective creation, something that could be communicated to other people and leave its mark not only on German literature, but on that of Europe.

For no one before Goethe had attempted to write poetry in the oriental manner, to break out of the framework or the traditional forms of Western poetry. All poets, and among them Goethe, were writing poems inspired by nature, by aristocratic or bourgeois life, or simply by the life of the people. All poets, and among them Goethe, were writing poems influenced, to a greater or a lesser extent, by the classics of Greek and Latin antiquity. Prose was already reflecting a certain oriental influence, concerning itself to a certain extent with the delightful or wonderful, but always exotic subjects described by travellers or found in the *Thousand and One Nights*, which had been translated and published early in the eighteenth century. But poetry was still European poetry ; Goethe had to feel the irresistible charm of Saadi and Hafiz, before there could arise in Europe a form of poetry that was not only inspired by the East, but imitated from oriental poetry.

The "*Divan of the West and East*" is not only an event of considerable importance in the literary history of the great Goethe : it is an event of considerable importance in the history of European literature.

Others who are better qualified than I, will be able to say how far Goethe was followed by other poets who strove to give an oriental flavour to their work. I am content to show how the reading of the Persian poets, and more especially of Hafiz, led Goethe into the midst of oriental poetry and developed in him an almost Moslem turn of mind.

In the first place, the component parts of his *Divan* are arranged in exactly the same way as are the parts of a "divan" or of a collection of verses by any Moslem poet. An oriental divan usually consists of several "bab", or books, each of them concerned with a definite poetic form: the panegyric, the elegiac, the satiric, the epigrammatic, the Bacchic, the love-poem, the battle-poem, the mystic, etc., etc. And this is how Goethe arranges his *Divan*; even the titles of these parts are Persian or Arab titles: *Moghanni* (singer)—*'ichq* (love)—*sàqi* (cup-bearer)—*amthàl* (parables). Not to mention those titles which consist of names: Hafiz, Teymour, Zuleika, Paradis.

These subjects are not always treated exactly in the Oriental manner; Goethe is by no means a servile imitator; in everything that he composes there is something of himself, something European and German. But the form has about it something exotic which irresistibly reminds us of certain Arab or

Persian poems; and sometimes the poet makes a pure and simple translation of some passage from oriental literature—for instance when the Prophet, Teymour, Hafiz, or one of the other characters is speaking.

As is only natural, Goethe is sometimes vague and even incorrect; and an Oriental would be scandalized by certain details of these poems. For instance, the best part of his *Divan* is that entitled “Zuleika”, which tells of the love between Goethe and Marianne Willemer. Zuleika is Marianne, Goethe is Hâtem. But in Arab literature Hâtem is a pre-Islamic name, denoting a warrior famous for his generosity. As for Zuleika, that name was unknown to the Moslems until a very late date, when they learnt the details of the story of Joseph—for Zuleika is none other than Potiphar’s wife! An Oriental is greatly shocked at the idea of Hâtem talking of love with Zuleika, especially when he knows that Hâtem’s beloved, of whom he sings in his poems, or in the poems attributed to him, was named Mâwiyyah.

Goethe’s familiarity with Eastern Bacchic poetry was of course derived only from the Persian poets, who were all mystics and whose praises of wine are purely allegorical: “The Book of the Cupbearer” would certainly have been different had Goethe been acquainted with the Bacchic poetry of Omayade El

Walid Ibn Yazid, or with that of the great Abu Nuwas. He would then have realized that his wine "of the year eleven" is too new, that the wines of the Arab Bacchic poet were older than Noah and sometimes even older than the creation of man ; he would have realized, too, that the non-mystic Bacchic poet loved wine not only because it brought intoxication, but because it satisfied all the pleasures of the senses, of all the senses, to the highest possible degree : its colour was a delight to the eyes, its perfume, to the nostrils, its flavour, to the palate, and its essence, to the soul. The act of drinking being always accompanied by music and song, and the cup-bearer being always a beautiful girl or a handsome youth, wine was the perfect vehicle of pleasure. Goethe has been reproached with having misunderstood Hafiz, for the wine whose praises are sung by Hafiz is a mystic wine, and the intoxication that it gives is that of annihilation in the supreme Being. That Goethe should have turned this mystic wine into ordinary wine has been censured as shocking, even scandalous. But nothing proves to us that all the Bacchic verse of Hafiz and the other Persian poets is purely mystic ; and nothing proves to us that Goethe's naturalism does not carry the secret trace of something mystic. In any case, Goethe made use of what he came across, and I repeat, if, in his day, the great Arab Bacchic

poets had already been translated, he would have sung his praises of wine in a different manner.

After all, Goethe must not be considered as having copied any particular oriental poet ; he merely adapted to the uses of his own genius a form of expression that he discovered among the Orientals, just as he had previously made use of the poetic form of the Greeks.

Even if we say of his Orientalism what Gilbert Murray has said of his Hellenism, that it is not unfailingly exact, this in no way detracts from Goethe's merit, for he never wanted to become Greek, Persian or Arab—he always wanted to be himself, and to make use of everything that could further the full development of his talents.

There remains one unarguable fact and this is, that Goethe was the first European genius to have attempted to establish a profound familiarity between the East and the West. In so doing, he succeeded in overcoming distance and differences, and in revealing the fundamental unity of the human spirit.

Throughout his works, which are to be expounded in this volume by eminent thinkers and writers, Goethe shows himself as *the man*, whose memory we wish to honour and whose example we wish to follow.

Believing as I do in that ideal of understanding for which Unesco strives, I am happy to remember that we may read in the *Divan* :

The West, like the East,  
Offers thee pure things to taste.  
Leave thy whims, leave the rind,  
Sit down at the great feast:  
Even in passing by, thou wouldst not wish  
To scorn this dish.

He who knows himself and others  
Will realize this too :  
The East and the West  
Can no longer remain apart.

To rock happily between these two worlds,  
So be it;  
Therefore, may it prove profitable also  
To move to and fro between East and West !

( *Translated from French* )